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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

VOL. II.



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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"ST. OLAVE'S," "JANITA'S CROSS,"

"ALEC'S BRIDE,"

&c., &c.

"'Tis only noble to be good."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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JEANIE'S QUIET LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HUGH DEEPING bowed politely in acknowledgment of his landlady's prospective kindness. But a much brighter thought came into his mind as he turned over the leaves of Sarah Matilda's music, Mrs. Mallinson meanwhile regarding the two young people with a complacent smile, and balancing in her own mind the respective merits of the ministerial profession and the iron business.

She decided in favour of the latter. For, as she said to her husband that same night,

after the shop was closed, iron was such an excellent thing for getting a young man on in the world ; there was really nothing like it ; it seemed to give him a start right away, if only he kept to it, and wasn't afraid of work. And for her part, there was nothing she should be more thankful for than to see Sarah Matilda comfortably settled with some one who had agreeable prospects in that line. It would be a load off her mind, she said, being the only one in the family, and naturally so very much laid upon their affections, if she should meet with somebody suitable. And then the good lady, seeing that her husband was much too intent upon the counting out of his Saturday gains to bestow proper attention on anything she might have to advance, drifted off into a mental process of castle-building, which ended with the custom-

ary nasal demonstration, given this time with unusual significance.

But, unfortunately for Mrs. Mallinson's speculations, Hugh's bright thought led him in quite another direction. And so it came to pass next morning, when the Oresbridge bells were calling shoals of well-dressed people to their devotions, and filling the streets with equipages of all degrees of magnificence, from the one-horse basket-carriage of the thriving tradesman, who had just set up a house in the country, to the luxuriously-stuffed and padded barouche of the merchant millionaire, Mr. Feverige's young clerk found himself once more on the shady road which led to Lyneton Abbots church. Greatly, it must be confessed, to the disappointment of Sarah Matilda, who had quite reckoned upon his company in the Mallinson family pew at Gros-

mont Road chapel. Sarah Matilda enjoyed taking strangers to chapel, especially gentlemen, for then there used to be so many inquiring glances towards number twenty-five, and such stealthy turning of bonnetted heads in that direction during the performance of service, and such undisguised criticism of the visitor when the congregation was dispersing; followed, upon the first convenient opportunity, by various pleasant little inuendoes from inquisitive female friends, who, of course, could look upon the new worshipper in no other light than that of a fresh aspirant for the honour of Miss Mallinson's affections, and gave her their congratulations accordingly. Sarah Matilda liked anything of that sort very much. It never hurt nor grieved her, not in the least, that people should pry into any private affairs of hers, and make their re-

marks thereupon either to herself or others. Indeed, she rather enjoyed it than otherwise, and lost no opportunity of laying herself open to such broad-cast insinuations, which invested her, as she imagined, with enviable superiority over other members of the congregation, incipient maiden ladies, and speculating mammas, with very large families of daughters, who never got a stray occupant of that kind into their pews.

So that it was quite an overclouding of her prospects when Mr. Deeping announced his intention of going to the old church at Lyneton Abbots, instead of performing his morning devotions beneath the splendidly-decorated ceiling of the Grosmont Road chapel, in Mrs. Mallinson's pew, with cushions in abundance, and no mention of rent at present, which was five shillings a quarter.

Mrs. Mallinson, too, felt herself slightly aggrieved. Not, she said, that it was any object having the seat let, nothing of the sort, and Mr. Deeping need not consider himself bound to it if the situation was not suitable, though it *was* the best in the chapel for seeing and hearing, and finished off with everything that made it desirable for parties wishing to worship with comfort and convenience, and room enough for their feet, and a hot air pipe passing directly under it, as Mr. Mallinson expressly stipulated there should be when he sat on the committees, and headed the subscription with such a noble sum, being, as she might say, a leading man in the concern, and looked up to for something handsome. But she certainly did think that Mr. Deeping would have felt the compliment of being asked, and would

at any rate have considered it his duty, after paying such attention to Sarah Matilda on the previous evening, to accompany the family to chapel, and so make himself, as she might express it, one of themselves, which she had always wished him to be from the time that she heard of his good prospects at the Bellona iron-works.

And Mrs. Mallinson was so convinced of the correctness of these her opinions, that she confided them to Sarah Matilda, whilst putting on her new winter bonnet—from one of the best shops in Oresbridge, thirty shillings, velvet, with French flowers inside and out, such a bonnet for style and effect, as never had had the benediction said over it in Park Street chapel, she dare venture to say—and doubtless she would have expressed them, though perhaps in a modified form,

to Mr. Deeping himself, had he not disarmed her incipient discontent by proposing to join the Grosmont Road congregation in the evening.

So Hugh left behind him the smoke and fog of Oresbridge, and bent his steps to the quiet village, where little clusters of people were already wending their way to the churchyard, loitering there among the grave-stones, or waiting, as many of the children did, Sunday after Sunday, by the grassy path under the yew trees, to get a smile from Jeanie and Miss Lyneton as they came up to the chancel door.

The old church at Lyneton Abbots, around whose hoary tower so many quiet sleepers lay, waiting for the morning; St. Hilda's church, which guarded in its stony clasp the ashes of many a noble knight and lady fair; within whose walls, so mouldering now, and lichened

over with damp of age, the true life of man had been fed and strengthened by his worship ; where sweet words of praise had told forth the gladness of human hearts, and where, sore wounded by many a grief, and stained by many a sin, those same hearts had breathed out all their sadness : where, when faith had not yet learned to waver, nor reason, striving after things too lofty for her, to touch with proud hand the Name which is above every name, the simple village people had come to listen to the teaching of that book, whose sweet stories were for them true as the stars, and lasting as the eternal hills, upon whose terrible warnings or brave bright words of cheer no sceptic yet had laid his cold "perchance" of doubt and scorn. The old church of Lyneton Abbots, so hallowed by the noblest life of generations past, how entering there, it

seemed as though man's vain and foolish thoughts must fall away, touched by the felt presence of those other thoughts which the long ago dead worshippers had left behind ; and so the soul, set free from earthly greed, and toil, and longing, might win its home in the one great thought of God.

So Hugh Deeping felt, as he uncovered his head, and went for the first time into St. Hilda's church, the church where, for more than five centuries past, the Lyneton people had been laid to rest.

The bells had but just begun to chime, and only a few stray people had come in, mostly very aged women, who gathered round the pulpit, and seemed, when they were not talking to each other in subdued undertones, to be diligently spelling out the service in their worn prayer-books.

Hugh had no prayer-book, and, indeed, for the finding of his places it would have been of little use to him; for the order of Morning and Evening Prayer throughout the year, as observed by devout church people, was entirely unfamiliar to him, and he knew scarcely anything of Advent, or Lent, Quinquagesima, Sexagesima, or Trinity Sundays, beyond seeing them duly entered in the almanacs. So, as the village people kept dropping in, he seated himself in a quiet corner by the reading-desk, where his unwitting non-observance of the Church forms would not be conspicuous, and retired into the seclusion of such thoughts as place, and time, and circumstance might bring.

St. Hilda's church was a quaint old building, quite as decrepit, and much more time-worn than the many-gabled mansion across

the road, whose inmates had been christened, married, and buried for successive generations beneath the shadow of its oaken-beamed roof. The walls were crowded with tablets, some of whose inscriptions were quite effaced with stain of age and mildew. Here were records, too, of gifts made to the church, so many acres of land left by Dame Somebody, of the parish of St. Hilda, whose rental was to be divided among a certain number of poor widows of the same parish; such and such a farmstead bequeathed to the feoffees, under condition of their restoring, at stated intervals, the statue of St. Hilda over the church porch. And, next to that, a very worm-eaten panel, let into the pillar just over the churchwarden's pew, informed those who were patient enough to decipher its almost illegible characters, that Mistress Dorothy de Langworth,

of this parish, did give and bequeath, out of her personal estate, the sum of five pounds yearly, to be expended by the churchwardens in bread, and by them distributed to the poor of the parish for ever.

But in the chancel these lesser relics of departed worth gave place to the costly marble urns, and sculptured angels, which guarded the dust of the ancient Lyneton race. Under carven canopies, beneath full-mailed effigies, with sword, and spear, and shield, they slept peacefully enough now, those doughty warriors, whose names had once had a sound of terror in them, those fair-cheeked maidens, dowered with ancestral pride and beauty, who had once lighted up with their smiles the old house at Lyneton Abbots, or made merry with the music of their voices its now so quiet chambers. There they lay, and

Hugh Deeping, from his sheltered corner behind the reading-desk, could ponder over their epitaphs one and all, from the full-length recumbent statue of Sir Gasparin de Lyneton, founder of the line, whose tomb was restored and beautified in the year 1600, by his descendant, Roger de Lyneton, onward, century after century, until he reached the two monumental brasses, scarcely tarnished yet, under which lay the latest buried of that proud house; their rank, title, and estate set forth very briefly, for Graham Lyneton was a man who ever disliked pomp and show.

“Margaret Lyneton Lyneton of Hatherleigh-Lyneton, in the county of Middlesex, married to her cousin, Graham Lyneton, of Lyneton Abbots, in this county; died December 21st, 18—, aged twenty-five.”

That monumental brass was very rich with

armorial bearings and quarterings, and it bore on shield and scroll the Lyneton device of a hand and cross—trust and daring—in which two things none of that house had ever failed. The next was much simpler, having only Mr. Lyneton's own arms. The Highland wife was no lady of high degree to need much telling of her rank and title, much graving of escutcheons and armorial bearings. This was all it held:—

“Jean Wardour, second wife of Graham Lyneton; died September 19th, 18—, sincerely loved and deeply lamented.”

Jeanie's mother.

Hugh Deeping was yet musing over this inscription, which was difficult enough to decipher, being done in old Church text, with illuminated capitals, when the grey-headed serving-man, who had answered his summons the

day before, came in through a little side entrance, and held open the door of the chancel-pew for the Manor-house people to enter.

Mr. Lyneton first ; then Gwendoline, calmed and grave as any of the noble race whose name she bore ; next, Jeanie, youngest born and best beloved—Jeanie, who wore her mother's smile, and whose mother's heart looked out again from eyes of the bluebell's own colour. Truly they were winning eyes, so loving and so trustful ; telling of no great spirit, of no strong will that could dare and do in life's hard battle, telling only of a kindly nature, full of trust, because never yet deceived, full of love, because receiving nought but love again. Jeanie Lyneton's great beauty was in that guileless look of hers. With it, she could not but win love wherever she went. Like the fabled ring which guarded one beau-

teous lady safe from thought or touch of harm, from shore to shore of Erin's island, that look of Jeanie's would be her talisman so long as the true heart of which it told, held fast its truth.

The service began. With a strange beauty the grand old words of the English liturgy fell upon Hugh's ear. Brought up, as he had been, under a system which abjures all form and ceremony, and leaves its members free to worship God in their own fashion, there gathered for him no air of sanctity, no charm of long past associations, around those prayers and confessions, through which the religious life of so many generations had found fit utterance. Yet he joined in them now with the more reverence, because they had not become to him as they have become to many who utter them Sunday after Sunday through the

length and breadth of our land, the mere shell of an outworn feeling, the noble and graceful vesture of a body from which the soul has long ago fled.

For Hugh, that Litany in which even now Jeanie Lyneton, with bowed head and reverent voice, was joining, seemed to tell out all his life, its best desires, its deepest penitence, its longing after rest and peace and purity. Though untried as yet in all that makes the deep and terrible earnestness of life, though untouched by the iron which enters into the soul, that wound which sooner or later every true man must needs feel, he had not lived a thoughtless life—nay, there had been much of worthy effort in it, much true and enduring labour, much fostering of good purposes, which might, when the time came, blossom into actions as good.

But little strife. The right and the wrong had never fought desperately together in Hugh's heart. He had never been crushed by a power of evil so great that his own weak power of good could no longer stand against it. There had been no battle for him as yet; what wonder, then, that he never sought for spear or sword to help him in the fight? No Giant Despair had come out against him with front of gloom and terror; his feet had stumbled over no dark mountains; his hands had never been stretched helplessly forth in a gloom upon which not the faintest streak of dawn arose, to tell that morning would come ere long. Through all those bright years of youth and early manhood, circumstances had never called forth any power of resistance which lay dormant within him. His life had been just one plea-

sant summer day, whose blue sky no thunder-storm had ever yet visited, first to cloud and then to purify it.

Until three months ago, when experience began to tell him a different story, and teach him by rude toil and endeavour what in the sheltered seclusion of the old life he could never learn. He had read of fortitude and self-denial; of the quiet bravery which plods through weary days and wins no laurels at their close; of the patient heroism whose triumphs are unrecorded, save by the holy angels. But only read of them, never thought that he would have to practise them for himself. Now, he was bidden go forth and do that of which he had but dreamed before. He was bidden to make his own life, like all other worthy lives, perfect through suffering. This was a hard task, one from which stouter hearts

than his have turned in sadness, finding no way to fulfil it. It is easier to behold far off the lofty mountain which wears the sun's bright coronet upon its brow, and folds so royally around it its purple robe of cloud, than to climb step by step, past many a vexing brake and pitfall, through cloud which is *only* beautiful far off, to the shining height where storms never come.

And of the bitter strife and questioning, the discontent and restlessness which those three months past had taught him—not the bitterest, though, which he would know—these prayers and confessions seemed to be telling out all the story. Listening to them, joining in them as he had never joined in any prayer before, Hugh felt himself lifted into a higher world of thought. He began to feel that no past need be counted altogether unhappy which has

turned dreaming into doing, thought into action ; that into every life work which God has given, there may be brought an earnest purpose and a noble consecration which shall make it great ; that for those who use it worthily, even disappointment may be a rich inheritance—a precious gift, though one which asks no thanks.

These thoughts fell into Hugh's mind as he listened to the prayers in Lyneton Abbots church ; fell there to take root and bring forth fruit in their own time and season. And side by side with them, not dimming their holiness by its touch, came his thought of Jeanie Lyneton. Truly not dimming their holiness ; for any man whose love is pure and faithful need not fear to place it side by side with his brightest thought of God.

For he had but to look up, and her face

was before him, peaceful as faces we see sometimes in dreams. Little Jeanie Lyneton, the one girl out of all the world for whom he felt he could toil and strive and labour and wait—ay, wait, it might be for long years, so only he should win her for himself at last.

You may smile at Hugh Deeping because he was so easily wrought upon—because as he sat there by the reading-desk, there were tears in his eyes, and strange, new desires stirring within him. You may call him romantic if you will, fitful, impressible; too much so for stability or trustworthiness. He might be so, perhaps he was. Great truths rise slowly; life does not teach anyone all its lessons in a few little years. Like a fire newly fed, his spirit burned within him now. By-and-by, it would calm into an even glow, giving out more heat, if less flame. But say

that he was simply fascinated by the unaccustomed beauty of a fine ritual, charmed by the poetry of an old religious worship; that he would fall back when its influence was forgotten, into the former thoughtlessness—no; for it needs not time, but only God's great power and a simple faith, to turn the current of a human life and bend it onwards to the right. Say that he was beguiled by a sweet face, dazzled by a pair of beautiful eyes shining down into the unoccupied chambers of his fancy—no; for if some hearts drift slowly toward each other, only learning through long years to love and trust, others touch through a single look, and part again no more for ever.

CHAPTER II.

AND Gwendoline sat there all the time in the Manor-house pew, looking so calm and stately; beneath her the ashes of the brave knights and courtly ladies out of whose life her own had grown; above her their names, ancient, noble, unsullied names, graven in the stone which told how purely they had lived, how truly they had loved, how fearlessly they had died and passed away, leaving behind them an unstained honour, that noblest heritage their children could hold in fee.

Yes, who had loved so truly, never betraying any who trusted them. There lay the

body of Alitha de Lyneton, who waited twelve years while her betrothed fought in the ranks of the Crusaders; waited for him so long, and received him home at last, dead. Then she lived a lonely life for his sake; and dying, was buried here in this old church of Lyneton Abbots. And the brave knight Bertram, too, who wore his lady's colours on many a battle-field, and never cared for look or smile save hers; who was so true to her, through tedious campaign and foreign march, nor feared to leave her in the gay queen's court, because she belonged to the old Lyneton house, and when did any that trusted a Lyneton find that trust betrayed? And next to Bertram was the name of Eleanor—noble and faithful Eleanor, who for the love that she bore her husband, followed him, his page, to the far-off battle-field, and

served him there through all the fight; and unloosed his helm and bound his wound, and gave him drink when he was dying; and then, laying her face to his, died too, and the soldiers buried them together, none knowing who she was.

Should Gwendoline Lyneton be less true than these? Should she fail when they had stood so nobly? Nor was it for honour only that she should keep her trust to him, who thought of her across the seas, and loved her well, though nothing bound them but each other's truth.

And then Gwendoline thought of that July night five years ago, when, under the old stone griffins by her brother's gateway, Maurice Demeron had said good-bye to her, knowing that they would meet no more again until for both of them the brightness

of youth was passed away. Knowing that long years of trial for her, of foreign toil for him, lay between this parting and his welcome home ; knowing, too, that Gwendoline Lyneton was as faithful as she was proud, and that while the fair flower of her love sheltered itself beneath the rock of that pride, no storm could ever uproot or shake it.

Perhaps that thought was lingering in her heart still, when Hugh Deeping, happening to look from Jeanie's face to hers, saw upon it that almost gentle smile which came so rarely, and made her seem so beautiful. Seeing it, Hugh thought they were surely wrong who called Miss Lyneton only proud.

All too soon for him, who could have staid in that old church many long hours, nor found them wearisome, the service came to a close. As he watched Jeanie Lyneton stand

up during the last singing, and caught now and then some sweet tone of her voice, the words of a pleasant rhyme came chanting themselves through his memory—words that had come there many times before, only for their music, but now with other charm than that.

“ Long was the good man’s sermon,
Yet it seemed not so to me,
For he spake of Ruth, the beautiful,
And still I thought of thee.

“ Long was the prayer he uttered,
Yet it seemed not so to me,
For in my heart I prayed with him,
And still I thought of thee.”

The grey-haired servant came to open the pew door, and Hugh drew back that they might not see him as they passed out. But when all the people were gone—when the clergyman had put off his surplice, and disap-

peared behind the laurel hedge which skirted the Rectory garden—when the old sexton woman was clearing away the last of the prayer-books from the school-children's gallery to the church-warden's pew, where they were kept for better safety, he lingered in the chancel, under pretext of examining the Lyneton monuments, which, indeed, brought many an antiquarian there, for they were considered grand specimens of old English art. And whilst the woman, with an eye to possible half-crowns, pointed to one and another canopied tomb, and told him some deed of lofty daring, or some story of true love, which belonged to it, Hugh Deeping sat in Jeanie's corner, under the first Mrs. Lyneton's hatchment, and leaned his head against the pillar where hers had rested sometimes, and turned over the leaves of the prayer-book—the great

leather-covered prayer-book, with the Lyneton device upon its clasps, and almost wished that the old woman would keep on talking until afternoon church-time.

He was glad, though, that she had not been drawn out to such an extent, when, coming out of church at last, and turning into the narrow foot-road, which led across to the Manor-house, he met the two ladies coming home from the walk which they generally took after morning service—met them so unexpectedly, that he had not time to turn aside, as most likely, with a new unaccustomed instinct of shyness, he would have done, had he seen them in the distance.

Gwendoline was standing in the gateway, where she had said good-bye to Maurice Demeron five years ago, the brown leaves dropping upon her, and crushing under her

feet. Brown autumn leaves, which would not fall again now until he had come home. As Hugh passed, she bowed to him slightly, with grave courtesy, such as she would have used to the humblest of her father's tenants, or the raggedest little village urchin who made his rustic obeisance to her when they chanced to meet on the green. But Jeanie, with a frank, recognising smile, wished him good morning, and paused for a moment by the gate, as though, but for the presence of the elder lady, she would have said more. But Miss Lyneton turned, missing the light footstep by her side, and then Jeanie hurried on, and the two were soon out of sight.

So he went home again through the Sabbath noontide stillness, along that secluded country road, where scarce a footstep but his own stirred the dry fallen leaves. Be-

neath spreading oak trees, which dropped their ripe acorns upon him as he passed, and scarlet maple bushes, whose clusters of trembling berries shone like blood-red crystals in the October sun. Home again, with all sweet and pleasant thoughts nestling in his heart, thoughts of joy, which the autumn leaves, telling, as they did, of winter near at hand, of November damp, and December chill, and the slow death of the weary year, had no power to darken. Thoughts which never asked the wherefore of their joy; but strayed on into the happy future, with a sure trust that all would be well.

Home again to the provision-dealer's shop in the Grosmont Road, where a very earthly odour of beef in process of roasting had replaced the usual week-day smell of smoked hams and newly-baked loaves; and where Mrs.

Mallinson, in her Sunday gown of black silk, was ready to pounce down upon him with an intimation of dinner at half-past one, punctual. For it had been arranged that Mr. Deeping was to dine with the family on Sundays, and Mr. Mallinson liked his dinner as soon as he came home from chapel; it gave him time to have a comfortable sleep in the afternoon, before the stray exhorter, who generally supplied Grosmont Road in an evening, came in to tea, and a diet of conversation on matters connected with the split.

“A beautiful sermon, sir, and especially clear upon the doctrines,” Mrs. Mallinson observed, as she came to inform Mr. Deeping of the dinner arrangement, and then made a tour of investigation round the room, dusting the ornaments meanwhile with her handkerchief, “especially clear upon the doctrines, as

me and my husband gave him a hint yesterday he was to be, on account of your being a stranger, and wanting you to be made acquainted with the views of the body. And indeed, sir, my husband took it rather amiss, your not going to the chapel with us, for he's jealous of the honour of the body, is my husband, and can't do with no slight put upon it; and if it isn't any offence mentioning it, sir, he did look at it as something of a slight, and so did Sarah Matilda, as you didn't join us in the family pew, where there's the best of cushions, and everything to make yourself comfortable with. And excellent, too, for a view of the congregation; because as I said to my husband when he chose the situation, do let us be somewhere prominent, so as we can see the congregation, and if strangers happen to come, and we can be looked up to

as an example of attending regular, and putting into all the collections, as it's the duty of the leading members to do, especially when a cause isn't as one may say fairly on its own foundation, as ours isn't at the present time; though I don't doubt that we shall raise as good an interest before long as what [any denomination in Oresbridge can do."

* And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed that vehement, conclusive sniff of hers.

"Yes, sir; a good many of the Park Street folks is looking with an envious eye upon the chapel as my husband has been the means of raising, and it went into them, I know it did, because I had it from a party as is intimate with Mrs. Green, a little further down the road, when our new ceiling was finished so much handsomer than what they was able

to do for themselves; not to mention the oak graining which is a deal liker to natural wood, so the architect says himself, than Park Street, though they paid twice as much for it, because of having it done by a good hand; just pride, nothing else but pride, when they saw we was raising up a cause as promised to overget their own, and then the pipes got heated and made it crack, which, as me and my husband said, was a judgment upon them for going to such an expense."

Mrs. Mallinson might have added that the Grosmont Road graining had also cracked and shelled off, in consequence of the over-heating of the pipes; but that was not a judgment, nothing of the sort, only a very reprehensible act of carelessness on the part of the chapel-keeper, for which he had just been dismissed. Mrs. Mallinson had a very acute

perception of providential judgments, when they alighted upon the Park Street congregation, and caused the oak graining to shell off in their newly-decorated chapel, or visited a certain little shop further down the road on the opposite side, and so overclouded Mrs. Green's business prospects as to prevent her from giving her usual quarterly subscription towards the support of the old body. The finger of Providence was clearly enough seen in such instances as these. But when the Grosmont Road graining came off, or a thunder shower penetrated the ventilator and marred the splendour of the ceiling, or Mr. Mallinson's custom fell away in consequence of depression in the iron trade, Providence was not quite so manifest. Indeed, it was ignored altogether, and accidental circumstances took the responsibility upon themselves.

“But we shall look for you to go with us this evening,” she continued, giving a finishing touch with her handkerchief to the ornaments on the chimney-piece, “which will show respect to the cause just the same, though it isn’t Mr. Barton’s turn to preach, only an exhorter, as my husband don’t look up to like the regular minister. And we’ll be happy if you’ve a mind to stay to your tea, though it wasn’t mentioned in the agreement; and Sarah Matilda ’ll sing you some of her sacred pieces, for you to join in with. She has some beautiful pieces, has Sarah Matilda, as she was taught at the boarding-school, and she takes the high notes, sir, beautiful, if only she don’t give way to her nervousness.”

To all which, and very much more, spoken in Mrs. Mallinson’s usual exalted key, and ac-

accompanied with the customary lateral movements of her face and right shoulder, Hugh listened very patiently. It had no power to vex him now. Girded in by those new, sweet thoughts of his, he was as a man who, sitting by his own ingle-nook, hears through curtained windows the distant complaining of the wind, and only knows that the air is frosty because it makes his fire burn with a brightened glow.

CHAPTER III.

AFTER that Sunday, Hugh settled down to work with new energy. Tough, hard work it was, too, but no longer made more hard and tough by the thought of any meanness or degradation connected with it. He learned that to add up figures at a counting-house desk, with the din of the great hammer sounding in his ears, or to pay to those grimy-faced, hard-handed men the wages they had earned at the smelting furnaces and the boiler-plate rollers, was a work quite as noble, if only duty called him to it, as rehearsing the lofty flights of Pindar, or solving Euclid's

problems in the distant seclusion of college chambers.

Still, look at it as he would, the Bellona iron-works could scarcely be considered a paradise, and he never felt drawn out to sing—

“Praise Him from whom all blessings flow,”

with more heartiness than when the six o'clock bell sounded, and the tramp of two hundred iron-shod feet over the clanking floors told that another day's work was done—another round completed on that treadmill, which, toil at it patiently as he might, would never quite fill up all his life, or be to him just so pleasant as the old quiet used to be.

And then the winter days set in, with their damp and fogs—fogs which never seemed so thick and yellow as at Oresbridge, and they poured their unwholesome breath, mingled with soot and smuts, down the counting-house

chimney, half blinding Hugh's eyes, and quite smothering his patience, as he plodded on through those endless rows of figures, and drew out invoices of "pigs" and rough iron, and prepared statements and balance-sheets for Mr. Sparkes, the senior partner, to overlook. Mr. Sparkes, who lived in that almost princely villa residence on the Grantford Road, and drove into town every day in a carriage and pair, and had a splendid balance at the banker's, and scrip more than he cared to tell, and knew nothing of Æschylus, or Pindar, or Homer, nor had ever heard that there was any such poet as Euripides, and could scarcely sign his own name correctly, to say nothing of even a distant bowing acquaintance with the grammatical laws of his mother tongue; whilst he, Hugh Deeping, with well-trained mind, and cultivated tastes, and college edu-

cation, had to add up figures, and pay mechanics' wages, and toil from nine in the morning until six at night for twenty pounds a quarter.

Then there was the coming home evening after evening to the provision-dealer's shop, with its close pent-up atmosphere, its everlasting smell of meal and bacon and newly-baked loaves; with its cheap fine upstairs sitting-room, streaked over with draggly antimacassars and scratchy crayon drawings, and its solitary cup and saucer, ranged side by side with a baker's "lump" on the coloury-patterned table-cloth. Just this, when he came in tired both in mind and body, longing for the sound of a friend's voice, the clasp of a friend's hand, the warm welcome of a friend's face. Nothing more than this, unless Mrs. Mallinson, heralded by her resonant sniff,

came upstairs to invite him into the back parlour, where Sarah Matilda had got some company to tea, and would be "particular pleased" if he would join in with them for a little music. Which meant that he was to "tidy up," and to make himself agreeable to a set of underbred young ladies, who had been criticising him the Sunday night before in chapel; and turn over their music for them, and listen to their lisping common-places, or be put through a series of questions relative to his mother and sister, and his previous life, and the circumstances which had led to his settlement in the Bellona iron-works. And if, tired with the patter-patter of small talk, he fell out of his place in the conversation and tried to be quiet for a few minutes, he was rallied on the pre-occupied state of his affections, and playfully called

upon by Miss Sarah Matilda to confess the name and habitation of the fortunate young lady who had captivated him, and was the event likely to take place *very* soon, and was the lady very beautiful, &c.? And then there was a sweet feminine chorus of titters from Miss Mallinson and her assembled company, who thought anything of that sort was so very amusing; there was really nothing they enjoyed so much as a little joke of that sort.

But for Hugh it was worse than even the loneliness of the tawdry sitting-room upstairs. Indeed, if he ever did sing his doxology with more fervour than upon the ringing of the Bellona six-o'clock bell, it was when Betsy came in to fasten up the shutters after one of these musical evenings, and to swathe the piano in its brown-holland pinafore, previous to the general going to bed.

All these little trifling disagreeablenesses put together worried him sometimes, and might have soured him, too, if Lyneton Abbots had not laid its weekly touch of brightness on the otherwise unsunned routine of life. For those were such pleasant afternoons, when, leaving behind him for a little while the smoke, and noise, and vexation of Oresbridge, he took his way down that quiet country road, accompanied by bright hopes, which, sometimes, before he came back again, had changed into brighter memories.

And certainly, if courteous treatment, and even a sort of measured hospitality, could be construed into indications of friendship, Mrs. Deeping's anticipations of the impression which her son would produce upon the Manor-house people, did not seem unlikely to be realized. Perhaps, after all, she had not been so egre-

giously mistaken when she put that corded silk Persigny tie into Hugh's portmanteau, and bought him a pair of the very best black kid gloves that could be got for love or money, and spent an entire morning in ransacking the Jersey haberdashers' shops in search of some collars of a particular cut, which, as the polite salesman assured her, made every one who wore them look "quite the gentleman." Though little Mrs. Deeping was proud to say *her* son was not dependent on collars, or black kid gloves, or Persigny ties, or anything of that sort, for his gentlemanliness, it being ingrained, and of a class which none of these things could ever give.

For not many of those Saturday afternoon visitations had taken place, involving, as they did sometimes, other conversation than that pertaining to figures and accounts, before Mr.

Lyneton discovered that his new secretary had a cultivated mind, and tastes far above those usually found in connection with book-keeping and counting-house management. A chance remark now and then betrayed Hugh's acquaintance with those classic authors, of which, in his younger days, Mr. Lyneton had been so diligent a student. Miss Lyneton, coming into the old wainscoted library on Saturday afternoon, when her brother had been called away, found him, this book-keeper in the Bel-lona iron-works, reading a copy of Homer in the original text, repeating to himself in undertones the flowing accents of the old Greek tongue—so absorbed, that she passed and repassed him without his being even conscious of her presence. Little by little Mr. Lyneton found that no common-place, half-taught youth was making his plans and keeping

his accounts, but a gentleman and a scholar, one in whom his own mind, finely-trained and cultivated as it had been, by a long life of association with men and books, could find satisfying companionship.

And so it came to pass that as the long winter evenings closed in, and visitors, always rare at Lyneton Abbots, became rarer still, with the exception of young Martin Allington, the Rector's reading pupil, who, for reasons best known to himself, so often found it needful to stroll over and get down a musty old folio or two from the shelves of Mr. Lyneton's library, always supplementing his study of it by a game of bagatelle with the young ladies—it came to pass, as the winter evenings closed in, that Hugh Deeping was sometimes asked to stay after his work was done, and join them in a quiet

hour of reading by the fire, in that oriel room facing the gateway; that same room whose ruddy firelight glow, pouring out into the deserted garden, he, a stranger then and uncared for, had once lingered to watch, longing to enter in and feel its genial warmth.

Pleasant evenings, to be remembered very bitterly some day when his welcome to the old house at Lyneton Abbots was worn out, and no face smiled to meet him there any more. Gwendoline would bring her etching materials and work at those copies from the old Catholic missals; and Jeanie, whose privilege it was to choose the books, used to sit on a low cushion by her father's chair, listening with rapt, eager attention whilst Hugh read, in that finely-trained voice of his, the quaint rhymes and sweet fancies

of the early English poets, or the brilliant pages of Scott, whose stories of her mother's country Jeanie loved so well to hear. Or sometimes he would read the old ballad poetry, tales of King Arthur's knights, and their fair-haired ladies, or the Troubadour romances which told so many a tale of love and truth, telling it sweetly, too. And then Gwendoline's pencil would rest idly in her white fingers, and the fringed lids would droop over the thoughtful grey eyes, and upon her face, so calm and still, there crept that gentle look which ever made her beautiful.

Much pleasanter that, for Hugh Deeping, than adding up columns of figures in the counting-house at the Bellona iron-works—that dingy little counting-house whose one small window looked out into the workmen's

sheds, with their blazing furnaces and smutty-faced puddlers, who clanked along with iron-sandalled feet over the metal floors, dragging after them what seemed to be huge red-hot cannon balls, which they heaved under the great hammer, not without a vehement oath sometimes when the unwieldy mass took a wrong turn, or slipped from the grip of their tongs. Pleasanter, too, than being summoned into the back parlour by Mrs. Malinson, to "join in" with Sarah Matilda in the performance of an indefinitely prolonged series of songs—for that young lady had quite got over her nervousness now—or being marshalled by the said Sarah Matilda to the Grosmont Road chapel, and there compelled to sit in the forefront of the congregation, the observed of all observers, but specially of certain young ladies, Miss Mallinson's in-

timate friends; who, like the Athenians of old, spent their time in nothing else but to see or hear some new thing; or, perhaps,—like the Athenians again—to propagate some new piece of gossip or promising scrap of scandal.

Hugh Deeping felt that he lived a pure, free life at Lyneton Abbots. Though they came but rarely, those evenings gave him strength and courage for the long battle which had to be done between them. And though the real, inmost heart of him never found room to speak even there, though there seemed between him and them a certain indefinable barrier, which he could neither understand nor overpass, though Miss Lyneton and her brother never asked him, with the sympathy which would have been so welcome, of his past life, its possible joys, and troubles, and

disappointments, never treated him with other than the grave, mechanical courtesy which the old Lyneton people always gave to those with whom they had to do, yet they took him for a little season from the chafing pressure of his daily duties, putting him into contact, if not into companionship, with refined natures, lifting him out of that dull round of task-work, which, with all the hopefulness he brought to it now, was still at times a great weariness—a burden heavy to be carried.

So Hugh thanked God from his very heart for those Saturday evenings in the old oriel room at Lyneton Abbots, where pale-faced Gwendoline sat weaving many a thought and longing into those delicate etchings of hers, where her stately brother, with shut eyes and folded hands, listened to the knightly tales of old—tales of the wars and tournaments where-

in his ancestors had won such great renown. And if the reader looked up by chance, Jeanie's face was towards him, with its eager, childish smile—its look of wonder and delight.

But when their eyes met, she turned hers quickly away.

CHAPTER IV.

SO the December days passed on, with many a fall of snow, that whitened all the churchyard graves, and lay in untrodden drifts on the balustraded terraces of the old house at Lyneton Abbots, and wrapped as in a glistening vestment the figure of Abbot Siward, that had stood for three centuries over the great doorway, looking quietly down while one after another of the Lyneton people had been carried out thence to their other home in St. Hilda's church. Passed on with many a shining hoar-frost, which turned each branch and spray of the leafless trees to silver, with many a bleak wind swirling

down the Oresbridge streets, and making the poor wretches there shiver into sheltered corners, or driving them away out to the open country, to nestle as near as the night-watch would let them to those great blazing furnaces, whose livid tongues shot up into the dark, and kindled the sky for miles round with their warm glow. And half-clad children would huddle together by the open gates, stretching out their little blue hands when some workman came past with his huge lump of red-hot iron. For its glow was so comfortable. They almost felt warm to see it shining in the dark. And they thought that when they grew big and tall, and could work like those strong-handed puddlers, there could be nothing so grand as standing to stir the ore in the great puddling furnaces. They would never be cold

then. They would not need to shiver at the open gates, and gather their rags more closely round them. It must be such a glorious thing to be always warm !

And still Hugh Deeping worked on at the old treadmill round. But worked on with more spirit and energy now, for he had a bright plan for the future, a plan which would more than bring back all the joy and all the promise of the former life. He had been three months at the Bellona iron-works, and Mr. Feverige had just paid him his first quarter's salary ; without, it is true, any very high-flown expressions of praise or satisfaction, for Mr. Sparkes' working partner was always a man of few words. But he gave Hugh what was much more to the purpose, promise of an advance for the next quarter, and for every succeeding quarter, so long as the

connection between them should be mutually satisfactory.

Hugh meant to stay there, plodding steadily on, serving his employers' interests as faithfully as he could, until he had laid by enough to enable him to complete his college course, and to spend those two years at Tübingen. Then, with a mind enlarged by knowledge of the world, raised, not lowered, by experience of actual life; also, Hugh reverently felt, being more apt to teach others because having himself learned the true wisdom which comes of self-distrust, he might begin his course again, and reach even yet that coveted position which once seemed so near.

After that.

For still those pleasant afternoons at Lynton Abbots came, week by week. Hugh worked to some purpose at the plans for

improving the worn-out estate. There was hope now that with good management and careful oversight it might hold together, and perhaps after a time be worked round again to a little of its former value. So that he felt his labour was not in vain, even though it had brought him nothing more than the half-yearly stipend which he thought at first was going to be so hardly earned.

But it brought him so much more than that. For generally now, after those long consultations in the library, or walks over the estate, planning, measuring, making estimates for repairs, Mr. Lyneton used to bring his young clerk into that oriel room where the Manor-house people spent their evenings; brought him there to read aloud to them, or that he might help to pass away with his bright, pleasant conversation—for Hugh

shone to much more advantage in the oriel room than in the back parlour of Canton House—those long hours which sometimes hung rather heavily upon their hands. And when they parted, Miss Lyneton no longer bowed to him with grave, distant courtesy; but held out to him her hand, as though he were indeed not an underling in that house, but in some sort a guest, to whom, without any lowering of its ancient dignity, the honour of a guest might be given. Receiving so much already, Hugh Deeping hoped that some day he might be counted worthy enough, honourable enough, to ask for more.

But Miss Lyneton did it out of pure kindness, nothing more; except, perhaps, that she was glad for her brother's sake to welcome this young stranger, and give him a place now and then in their fireside gatherings. For

Mr. Lyneton seemed to have taken very cordially to him. He even used to say that he quite looked forward to those Saturday afternoons when Mr. Deeping came. And it was so seldom that he took to anyone. He shut himself out so, and lived such a secluded life. It might do him good to be stirred up a little, drawn out to feel an interest in things that were passing around him. And since Mr. Deeping did certainly brighten him very much, and almost seemed to have brought back his old interest in books and literary conversation, and altogether infused into his life a more genial element, it was simply a courteous return to make him welcome when he came; to sink now and then the actual relationship of employer and employed in the other and more agreeable one of pleasant acquaintance.

But simply acquaintance. Nothing more than that. Between themselves, the Lynetons of Lyneton Abbots, with the pure, knightly blood of eight centuries flowing in their veins, with an ancestral roll unstained by smirch of trade, unsullied by a single name of other than noble degree, and this young man, this nephew of a London haberdasher, this ex-student of some unknown college, who, well trained, it is true, and with tastes somewhat above his position in life, was earning an honest living as under-clerk in the Bellona works, there lay a distance which Gwendoline Lyneton never dreamed he would dare to pass, and count himself their friend. Her brother had kindly shown the young man some little attention, she herself had pitied him, knowing how little companionship he had, and how hard he toiled to keep his place in

the world. It was very easy for them to put a little sunshine into his life, to give him from week to week an hour or two of that refined society which he seemed so gratefully to appreciate. More than this Gwendoline never intended. And had Hugh Deeping asked for more, had he ever sought by word or act to pass over one single step of the distance which she had measured between them, he would find that, though sitting, as they so often did, at the same fireside, interchanging the pleasant courtesies of social life, speaking of things, and thoughts, and feelings, which all cultivated minds hold in common, giving the hand-clasp of welcome and farewell, and meeting on the mutual ground of intellectual tastes and pursuits, there was yet the icy barrier of caste ever parting them; thin it might be as crystal,

and as transparent, but effectual, nevertheless. Like some sheet of fine pure plate-glass, which is never even seen until you seek to clasp hands with the friend on the other side, and then it strikes so cold.

But Jeanie had reared no such barrier between them. She did not need to be taught those two lines which Miss Lyneton used to listen to sometimes, as Hugh read them, with such a quiet, incredulous smile playing over her face :—

“ Kind hearts are more than coronets,
And simple faith than Norman blood.”

All unknown to her aunt Gwendoline, and perhaps also unknown to herself, Jeanie had learned to look forward with glad, happy content to those Saturday afternoons, when her father brought Mr. Deeping in out of the library, and they used to have such

pleasant firelight talks together; or, better still, readings from the old poets, who never seemed half so beautiful and true as when Hugh lent the music of his voice to give the story all its meaning. For Jeanie could not always understand or appreciate the conversation, when it drifted away, as it sometimes did—Mr. Lyneton being a staunch old Tory—to questions of politics and government, or rights of nations, and other subjects equally intricate and vexing. But she never missed a single beauty in those sweet old poems, never lost one thought that told itself so nobly through the quaint rhymes. And Jeanie fancied, sometimes, that to read them so truthfully, to take the sense of the words, and tell it out with such strong tenderness, the reader must in some sort have lived as these old poets lived, and suffered as they suffered, and looked forth into

the great world of life and nature with their pure, gentle eyes, searching out only its brightness, kindly veiling all the rest; and have trusted his fellow-men as they also trusted, and loved as they loved, with a love that could hold so true, that knew no change with changing fortunes, no decay with long parting, or even death.

She had never heard any one read those ballads as Hugh Deeping read them—so simply, with no grand declamations or attitudes, such as Mr. Allington used when he came in after dinner sometimes, and offered to amuse the young ladies for an hour or two with one of those old leather-covered volumes. True, Mr. Allington had a very fine voice, which had been trained under the best elocution masters of Oxford, and he knew the exact place where to

stretch out his white hand with an impressive gesture of command, or entreaty, or indignation, or scorn, just as the poetry might seem to demand. But there was no depth of meaning in his voice, no sound of passion or tenderness in it, no feeling that could not be held back, but must needs tell itself, sometimes in faltering words, sometimes in little silences, which revealed so much. And when Mr. Allington had finished one of Jeanie's favourite pieces, he would throw the volume carelessly on the table, and give his hair a few finishing strokes, for it got out of order a little during the process of declamation.

“Pretty thing—very pretty! And nicely told, too. Fine fellows, after all, those old English ballad-writers, only rather too simple-hearted. People don't believe quite so

much now, and don't practise all they do believe, either." And then he would propose a game at bagatelle.

Mr. Deeping never said anything like that. She should not care to hear him read again, if he did. But she did not think he could say it if he tried. And then she wondered what his life had been, and what he used to do before he came to Oresbridge; and whether, when his father died, he had no rich friends who could have helped him to stay at college, and go on learning to be a minister, instead of taking a clerkship in those iron-works, and spending all his time adding up accounts, which any common man could have done just as well. Not that she was sorry, though, for his leaving college, because, if he had not come to Oresbridge, they should never have known him. And

it was very pleasant to know him, to have him come there Saturday after Saturday, and read to them, and brighten her father up, as he always did seem to brighten up when Mr. Deeping came.

Mr. Allington never seemed to make such a difference when he strolled over from the Rectory in an evening after dinner. He was always "strolling over" now, and playing bagatelle with them; or bringing tenor songs, that she might play the accompaniments for him, because, he said, Miss Maberley, the Rector's sister, played so dreadfully out of time; he really *couldn't* get along with her, and *would* Miss Jeanie just go through one or two of them with him, to keep up his practice? A tenor voice got down so soon without practice. And Jeanie, being very kind-hearted, was willing to please him, even

to the extent of a whole evening's performance, though she could have employed the time, as she thought, so much more pleasantly in some other way.

Mr. Allington was a cultivated man, too, knew all about the classics, and had a large acquaintance with any new books that happened to be making a stir in literary circles. And he was much more of a gentleman in his dress and bearing than Mr. Deeping, though Jeanie *had* heard him say things sometimes about his sisters that she felt sure Hugh Deeping would never have said of any woman. When *he* spoke of his mother and sister, he did it with such a quiet reverence as those old Englishmen who believed in a woman's truth and goodness might have spoken of their mothers and sisters. She would like sometimes to

have talked to him about this sister of his, it must be hard for him to be so far away from her; only Aunt Lyneton always seemed to check her if she asked him any questions about his home life. It was not their place, she said, to know anything more of him than that he was gentlemanly, and trustworthy, and honourable in the position which he had to fill at Lyneton Abbots.

Thus far Jeanie used to get in her own private meditations during those Saturday evening readings. Then, perhaps, looking up, she found Hugh Deeping's eyes upon her, and she would turn away into the shadow of the great black marble chimney-piece, so that he could not see her face any more. For she felt as if he must have known what she was thinking about, and she did not want him to know.

But one Saturday, after the weekly balancing of the accounts, Mr. Lyneton had gone over to the Rectory, and Hugh came, as he was bidden, into the oriel room, where Miss Lyneton and her niece sat at their work. And for the reading that night they chose the volume of "Percy's Reliques," which contained the ballad of the "Nut-Browne Mayde," that same volume which Jeanie had come to fetch out of the library the first time she ever saw Mr. Deeping, more than three months ago, now. Was that why she so often chose it for him to read? Was that why it seemed to him the pleasantest of all the books on those old library shelves? And there in the blazing firelight, though, truly, Hugh needed none of its help to see what he knew so well by heart, he began to read that sweet simple old rhyme,

surely the sweetest and simplest that ever
true heart wove :—

He.

“ My destiny is for to dye
A shamefull deth, I trowe ;
Or elles to flè ; the one must be,
None other way I knowe.
But to withdrawe as an outlawe,
And take me to my bowe.
Wherfore adue ! my owne hart true,
None other rede I can.
For I must to the grenewode go,
Alone, a banyshed man.”

She.

“ O Lord ! what is this worldys blysse,
That changeth as the mone.
My somer's day, in lusty May,
Is derked before the none.
I here you say, farewell, nay, nay,
We depart not so sone.
Why say ye so ? wheder wyll ye go ?
Alas ! what have ye done ?
All my welfare to sorrowe and care,
Sholde change if ye were gone :
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone.

* * * * *

“Syth I have here bene partynèr
With you of joy and blysse,
I muste alsoe parte of your wo
Endure, as reason is ;
Yet am I sure of one plesure,
And, shortly, it is this :
That where ye be, me semeth pardè,
I colde not fare amysse ;
Without more speche I you beseche,
That we were sone agone,
For in my mynde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone.”

Hugh stopped and turned round to make some remark to Miss Lyneton.

But she had gone away. The words came too near her heart for quiet listening to them. Only that morning the Indian letter had come, containing its usual detail of barrack life and gaiety, a very long account of a ball at the Residency, and a brilliant description of the music and dresses. But there was no message for Gwendoline, nor any

meaning hidden for herself alone within those seeming common sentences. Was Maurice Demeron forgetting, then? Or was he trying her if she could be true and constant as the Nut-Browne Mayde?

"I think you need not wait for my aunt to come back again," said Jeanie. "She knows the poem well enough, for we often read it by ourselves. I like it the best of them all."

"Why do you like it?"

"Because it is so true. I am sure a good man wrote it."

"Do you think any woman would do all that for any man, now?"

"Yes. I am sure Aunt Lyneton could."

"Could you?"

But Jeanie flashed her face away from him into the shadow, not without a little touch

of impatience. Why did Mr. Deeping ask her that? What consequence was it to him whether she could love anyone as the Nut-Browne Mayde did? And she would not choose that volume any more for them to read, if he stopped and asked her questions.

So he went on, the book lying uselessly enough on the little reading-desk beside him, for there was no longer firelight enough to decipher the quaint old spelling. And still Jeanie thought, as she listened, that none but the poet who first dreamed the noble story of a woman's truth, could have read it as Hugh Deeping did:—

She.

“ Now syth that ye have showed to me
The secret of your mynde,
I shall be playne with you agayne,
Lyke as ye shall me fynde.
Syth it is so that ye will go
I woll not leve behynde,

Shall never be sayde, the Nut-Brown Mayde
Was to her love unkynde.
Make you ready, for so am I,
Although it were anone ;
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone."

He.

"For an outlawe this is the lawe,
That men hym take and bynde,
Without pytè, hanged to be ;
And waver with the wynde.
If I had neede, as God forbede,
What rescous colde ye fynde ?
Forsoth I trowe, ye and your bowe
For fere wolde drawe behynde :
And no mervayle, for little avayle
Were in your councele then,
Wherfore I will to the grenwode go,
Alone, a banyshed man."

She.

"Ryte well knowe ye that women be
But feeble for the fyght ;
No womanhede it is indede,
To be bold as a knyght.
Yet in such fere, eff that ye were,
With enemyes day or nyght,

I wolde withstande with bowe in hande,
To greve them as I might.
And you to save, as women have,
From deth fulle many a one;
For in my mynde of all mankynde,
I love but you alone.

* * * *

And though that I of ancestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have you proved how I you loved
A squyer of lowe degrè.
And ever shall, whatso befall,
To-day therefore anone;
For in my mynde, of all mankynde,
I love but you alone."

Jeanie's face was towards him again now in the dim firelight. As he read that last verse, their eyes met in one long questioning glance.

And this time, if Jeanie turned her face away, it was not for impatience.

CHAPTER V.

WHEN Miss Lyneton came back half an hour later, calm, collected as ever, Jeanie was alone; seated on the low cushion by Mr. Lyneton's empty chair, beside her on the hearth-rug, a volume of "Percy's Reliques," open still at the ballad of the "Nut-Brown Mayde." There was no longer firelight enough to read it, though, nor enough, as Jeanie sat there in the shadow cast by the heavy marble chimney-piece, for Gwendoline to notice the new look of happy trustful content which rested on her face.

Not the complacent satisfaction of the business-like young lady of modern society,

who has just put the finishing touch to a successful matrimonial bargain, and so protected herself against the terrible contingency of being "left behind" in the ranks of unappropriated spinsterhood. Not the polished smile of the carefully-trained belle, who sees in the precious treasure which has been placed at her disposal, the necessary and trifling preliminary to what she views as the ultimatum of a woman's happiness, a brilliant establishment, and an imposing array of servants, carriages, and dresses; nor yet the carelessly-worn triumph of the coquette, who has brought another captive to her feet, and added one more to the train of willing cavaliers who wait upon her caprices. Jeanie's was just the quiet gladness of a loving heart, which, knowing itself beloved, asks no more, and looks no further.

She was a very unworldly little creature, quite inexperienced in those social conventions which most girls who have seen much of life take up and work into their own characters so readily. She had her own primitive, noble thoughts about all these things. She had her own little air castles, built on the foundation of those old ballads and romances, but quite different from the modern style of architecture, as employed in fashionable erections of that sort. Then, happily for herself, perhaps, she had no young lady friend to talk to about these things. Spending her whole life in the seclusion of that old Manor-house, she had never had but one companion of her own age, Rose Beresford, the little Killarney girl, who had come to visit her for a few weeks at the Rectory. Rose was a bright, quick,

merry girl, but it was several years now since she came to the Rectory. They were both children then, not yet advanced to the dignity of long frocks, much addicted to swinging, and playing pranks with the old serving-man, who declared that they almost teased the life out of him, they were so full of tricks and nonsense.

Yet with a touch of romance about them even then, for they would sit for hours together on those stone dolphins under the fountain urn, composing marvellous pieces of poetry about valiant knights, who came, to the imminent peril of their necks, over moats and drawbridges to woo beautiful ladies in haunted castles. Only, as the measures had a vexatious trick of halting, and the last words in the lines never could be got to rhyme with anything like propriety, the story

generally stuck fast in the middle, never getting farther than the lady's consent—after which her father's wrath, and her own tears, and a great performance with carrier doves, or trusty waiting-maids, ought to have come—wound up at last with a grand wedding, with a very long train of bridesmaids, all so beautifully arranged in the juvenile author's imagination, if only those rhymes would not have been so unmanageable.

But that was years ago. And girls change so much even in a few years. Perhaps, if Jeanie were to see Rose Beresford now, they would not care for each other so much, or find a pleasure in talking about these things. The years that had kept Jeanie so closely folded up in that village home of hers might have expanded Rose Beresford into a gay, flirtish, fascinating maiden, fond of coquet-

ting, and making conquests, as these town-bred young ladies sometimes are. Quite different from the little pinafores girl who used to swing, and play pranks with the serving-man, and write romances under the fountain urn.

And that was the only friendship Jeanie had ever had the chance of making, so the old books in her father's library, the ballads, and legends, and histories, had been her companions ever since Rose went away.

Only these ; for, as the afore-mentioned gossips, the lawyer's wife, and the doctor's wife, and the widows, and maiden ladies, who lived on small annuities and large pretensions, used to say, the Lynetons were such a very exclusive set. Really they lived like nuns in that tumble-down old Manor-house, and seemed to think no one good enough to associate

with them. Indeed, they were far too exclusive for their own interests, for everyone knew there was nothing like going into society, and bringing one's attractions, whether of face, or manner, or pedigree, judiciously into the market, with a view to disposing of them there to the best customer, as neither Mr. Lyneton's sister nor Miss Jeanie had ever done.

So said Mrs. Jacques, the lawyer's wife, to Mrs. Lucombe, the doctor's wife. Miss Juliana, Mrs. Jacques' fifth daughter, was just finishing at a fashionable boarding-school in Paris. Mrs. Jacques had great faith in Parisian schools. She always said they gave such a splendid finish to a girl's manners, and rubbed off all that silly English nonsense about reserve and simplicity, and put her in a much better way of attaining a position for herself in the world. Four of her girls had already

secured carriages, and an income of fifteen hundred a year, to say nothing of mixing in the wealthiest circles of Oresbridge, and she attributed their success to nothing so much as their Parisian finish, which gave them such advantages over the rest of the Oresbridge young ladies.

“Finish, you know, my dear Mrs. Lucombe, is everything for a girl now. A girl is an absolute nonentity in genteel circles, unless you give her a Parisian finish.”

And then Mrs. Jacques said it was a thousand pities Mr. Lyneton had not given that girl of his the advantage of a year or two on the Continent. It would have done her such a world of good, and rubbed off all that foolish nonsense about seclusion and retirement. Seclusion and retirement, indeed, as if girls ought not to be educated with a view

to making an impression in society, and securing brilliant settlements! That was what *she* had had in her mind all along in the bringing up of *her* daughters, and she believed no one had been more successful than herself in getting them well established.

But Mrs. Jacques was quite mistaken if she thought that no hand had been reached out in attempt to pluck the little flower that bloomed so sweetly in the shelter of the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

Though Jeanie, perhaps on account of her father's failing fortunes, was never so much in request as Gwendoline used to be in the days of her girlhood, before Maurice Demeron won her heart, and carried it away with him to the far-off Indian Residency, Mr. Lyneton had had more than a few lengthy consultations in that wainscotted library, on matters

very nearly connected with his young daughter's happiness; consultations which ended, as almost all consultations that ever took place in the old library were destined to end, grievously enough for those who came to seek them there, but not at all grievously for Mr. Lyneton, who would fain keep his pet child with him as long as he could.

And now this young Martin Allington, who had come to the Rectory to read with the clergyman, was continually hovering round the house, evidently intent on the same errand; else why should he so often chance to meet the ladies in their daily country walks, and why should his studies lead him so constantly to the old folios in Mr. Lyneton's library, when Mr. Maberly, being a man of literary tastes and ample means, would of course have his own study fur-

nished with everything that was needful for the young man's college preparations? And why, if Gwendoline chanced to look up from her prayer-book in the old church pew, should she so often find Martin Allington's eyes fixed on Jeanie's face ; and why should he loiter under the yew-trees, Sunday after Sunday, to meet them coming out, instead of going home at once with the clergyman, whose garden-gate was on the other side of the church, quite away from the grassy footpath which led to the Manor-house ?

Miss Lyneton was disposed to look favourably on young Allington's suit. He was a man of good character, fair prospects, and an ancestral line which owned some names as noble as their own. True, he was not a person of shining talents, nor one who would ever give his family and friends great cause

to be proud of him; but there was much genial kind-heartedness about his nature, a love of home and home enjoyments, which, after all, goes further to make life's real content than the genius which only shines abroad, and the brilliant intellect which lights up every fireside save its own.

However, Martin Allington's position was already made. A rich country living in the gift of his uncle, Sir William Allington, was waiting for him to take possession of it as soon as his university course was completed. There, with a noble old parsonage house and a pleasant circle of cultivated people in the immediate neighbourhood, and the county town with all its advantages within easy reach, life for Martin Allington, and whosoever he chose to share it with him, might be a very pleasant thing. There would be

no long painful years of waiting then, for his promised wife, none of the weary suspense which, though no one knew it, had sadly bittered her own life.

No such hard trial of truth either. For Gwendoline thought that Jeanie, simple, child-like, with no great firmness or strength in that gentle nature of hers, would never hold fast, as she had done, to a hope that tarried so long, and a love that asked for so much faith to keep it leal and true. Better that she should early pass into the care of some kind heart, than learn, through long years of patient waiting, how to suffer and be strong. Would suffering make her strong, though? Would it not rather crush her? For that which roots the young tree, only tears up the little flowers which grow beneath it?

Gwendoline came and sat by Jeanie in the oaken-chair, drawing the child's head down upon her knee, as she often did when they sat alone there in that oriel room. It seemed so natural to pet and caress Jeanie Lyneton. Stroking the soft light brown hair which waved over her forehead, her aunt was reminded of the long ago years when she, scarce a woman then, but stronger and more fiery-hearted than ever Jeanie would be, used to sit by her sister's knee, and feel the touch of soft hands upon her cheek, and hear the tones of a sweet voice, which seemed to fall into the restless soul like dew when the long summer day is over. All the care—all the cherishing which Gwendoline Lyneton could remember, had been given to her by Jeanie's mother. She had never felt the influence of a loving woman's nature, save in those few years, the true

seed-time of her life, when the second Mrs. Lyneton bore rule in that home of Lyneton Abbots. And now she would fain pay back, if not with like motherly love, for that, she felt, could never be, yet with tender, faithful care, the years of nurture which had been spent upon herself. Could she be kinder then, than to smooth the path of one who would be a kind and loving husband to her?—who would shield her safely from all toil and danger, and make her life one long pleasant summer day of unbroken peace?

“Jeanie, papa said he should perhaps bring Mr. Allington over with him to-night.”

“Well?”

“And you have never practised the song he took so much trouble to bring you from Oresbridge.”

“I cannot help it. I did not want him

to get it for me, and I do not like it so very much."

"But he will be annoyed if you cannot sing it to him to-night. Shall I play it over for you now, before they come in?"

"No, thank you," and Jeanie shook her head impatiently—"I don't want to sing to-night."

"And you do want to disappoint Mr. Allington?"

"No. I don't want to disappoint anyone, only——"

Gwendoline said no more, and there fell another long silence between them. Her thoughts might have drifted away to the shores of India, where Maurice Demeron was counting the months until he came home. Not so many months now—only until these trees, through whose bare branches the Jan-

uary wind came sighing so dismally, had put on their robes of July beauty, drooping again with all their green wealth of leaf and blossom. The five long years had nearly worn themselves away. The love that had waited so patiently would be crowned at last, and Gwendoline's life would break forth with the golden summer-time into beauty and perfectness.

But where had Jeanie's thoughts strayed? and what dream-castles had she been building for herself as she sat there in the fire-light, with her face hidden in the shadow of the oaken chair? For she was the first to break that long silence, and she broke it with words that, like the restless flutter of the little bird, betray how near its nest is.

"Aunt Lyneton, what a pity it was that Mr. Deeping could not go to Tübingen and finish his college course."

Miss Lyneton did not know that her brother's clerk had ever contemplated any college course at Tübingen, and therefore its interruption caused her but little grief. Yet, somehow, those words of Jeanie's ruffled her, and she wished the child had not spoken them.

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. MALLINSON was free to confess —so she said to her husband—that, except in a monetary point of view, the gentleman they had secured for breakfast and tea was not so promising a speculation as had been anticipated.

Mr. Deeping had occupied the front sitting room and bed-room now for five months, had been treated like one of the family in every respect, made free of the back-parlour whenever he chose to come down in an evening and join Sarah Matilda at her practising, and invited to take a seat with them in the pew on a Sunday, without ever such a thing

being mentioned as his paying rent for it. Which, as Mrs. Mallinson observed, was clear five shillings a quarter out of their pockets; because, though Mr. Deeping had not been more than three or four times since he came to Canton House, still, if he were not under permission to go, they might have let the sitting to someone else. And, indeed, it had been in the list of vacancies for some months past, though without finding a suitable occupant. Gentlemen were scarce in the Gros-mont Road congregation, and Mrs. Mallinson was particular for a gentleman, because of his not taking up so much room. And whenever Sarah Matilda had a friend or two in to tea, there was always an invitation sent up to the front sitting-room for Mr. Deeping to join them, if he felt disposed, or sometimes it was suggested that the entire

party should adjourn to his room, it being larger than the back-parlour, and more convenient for company, except not having the piano. Indeed, Mrs. Mallinson said that if he had been her own son, she could not have laid herself out more to make him feel that he was received into the bosom of the family; and especially since she had heard, from one of the Grosmont Road members, who had a son in the Bellona iron-works, that Mr. Deeping had had an advance of salary, in consequence of giving such satisfaction to his employers, and that the advance was to be continued gradually so long as he remained in his present situation.

But, up to the present time, all this diligent attention to the new lodger's comfort had been as bread cast upon the waters. As yet Mr. Deeping showed no disposition to

acquaint himself with the peculiarities of the body which had detached itself from the old Park Street congregation ; neither by attendance at any of its numerous tea-meetings and bazaars and public opportunities of all kinds, did he manifest any sympathy with its views and opinions, nor, by living up to his privileges in the use of the pew, and cushions, and hymn-books, did he seek to identify himself with those who were burning and shining lights in the Oresbridge split.

And Sarah Matilda's music might have fallen on the desert air, for any effect which it seemed to have in attracting him more frequently to that back-parlour, whence its dulcet strains generally rose after he had come home for the evening. Indeed, he seemed disposed to keep himself altogether to himself, making scarcely any use of the privileges and oppor-

tunities which most young men in his position would have valued so highly.

Mrs. Mallinson partly attributed this unsatisfactory state of affairs to Mr. Deeping's occupation at Lyneton Abbots. He had never been quite himself since that first evening, more than three months ago now, when he came home unusually late, and said that he had been spending the evening with Mr. Lyneton. It had put high-flown notions into the young man's head, making him think that, as he was received on a level with the Manor-house people, he was quite too superior for anything like familiar social intercourse with parties who were engaged in business. Such ridiculous nonsense, indeed! As if the Manor-house people would ever think of such a thing as placing him upon a level with themselves. As if Mr. Lyneton, who, every one knew, was as

full of pride as he could hold, and poor too, so that he could scarcely keep himself on his feet, had paid any little attention to Mr. Deeping for any other purpose than screwing a few hours' extra work out of him, or perhaps getting him to feel more interest in the estate than he would do if he worked at it as a mere stranger. Selfishness—nothing but selfishness! Mrs. Mallinson thought it did not require very much penetration to find that out, and if Mr. Deeping's eyes had not been blinded by the dust which Mr. Lyneton had thrown into them, he would have found it out, too! Mrs. Mallinson had seen too much of the world to believe in disinterested kindness, shown to people who had no means of returning it; and poor Mr. Deeping would find himself painfully mistaken if he thought that Mr. Lyneton's

friendship went any deeper than his own advantage. Selfishness, that was just what it was—nothing but selfishness! And, indeed, why should it be anything else? Had not every one a right to do the best he could for himself, and for the denomination which he belonged to, and for the people to whom he was bound by the ties of duty and affection?

And Mrs. Mallinson, who had so much experience of the world, and who knew so exactly how to make her way in it, would like to have given her new lodger a motherly hint or two about not allowing himself to be too much elevated with the little kindness that had been shown him by the Lyneton people. Only he was so terribly stiff about his own affairs, and seemed to think it quite an intrusion if she came for-

ward with any remarks of a personal nature. Of course when a young man came into a respectable family, where there was an only daughter, with an education like Sarah Matilda's, and the best of prospects, having the entire property and the good-will of the business to look forward to, it was only natural that her parents should wish to know a little about him, and how his friends were situated, and if he had a mother and sisters, and if they were left independent, which she didn't think Mr. Deeping's mother and sister were, or he wouldn't be so particular in his expenditure, never getting fashionable fancy ties, or jewelry, or other things that most young men have a weakness for; and whether he intended to keep in the iron line, and was there any prospect of his being took as a partner, when the present

Mr. Sparkes, who had no family, dropped off, and left the concern in Mr. Feverige's hands?

Upon all of which important points Mrs. Mallinson had carefully probed her new lodger, but with the scantiest possible results. For instead of taking her remarks as any proof of motherly interest, and unbosoming himself to her, as she fully expected he would do when she gave him the opportunity, he had drawn himself up with an air of dignity, and put her off with short indefinite answers, or interrupted her with some questions quite wide of the mark—and, indeed, conducted himself in such a manner as quite to alienate her. And she really did not think it would have been such a very great misfortune after all, if Mrs. Green, who kept the grocer's shop a little further

down the road on the opposite side, had secured him.

So Mrs. Mallinson said, with many parenthetical sniffs as she bustled about in the back parlour one Monday morning, clearing out the furniture and tearing down the curtains, preparatory to the general cleaning, which always took place in February, so as to have the house in trim for the county ball, the first week in March.

Mrs. Mallinson had had no applications for her rooms as yet, but she had sent advertisements to the Oresbridge papers, intimating that a lady, or two ladies, requiring accommodation for the ball, might meet with the same on reasonable terms at No. 19, Gros-mont Road. And so a few days before the great event took place, a lady, who had come to spend the winter at the neighbour-

ing town of Grantford, did apply, and engaged the accommodation for herself and her daughter.

There was a difficulty, though. Canton House only contained one other "let," besides that already hired by Mr. Deeping, and this let consisted of a single bedroom, showily furnished, but quite insufficient for ball-room company, who always required the use of a sitting-room as well. However, Mrs. Mallinson was not disposed to lose her five guineas for so trifling an obstacle as that, and after a cabinet council in the back parlour, it was agreed upon that Mr. Deeping should be requested to vacate his sitting-room for one day, placing it at the disposal of the lady and her daughter, whilst he made himself at home with the family in the back parlour. And Hugh, being of an obliging turn of

mind, agreed, only mentally resolving to spend as little time as possible in the company of Sarah Matilda and the forty-guinea piano.

Which, as Mrs. Mallinson remarked, was really very kind of him—the agreement, not the mental resolve—and almost made her regret the acrimonious train of reflection into which she had been led whilst preparing for the general cleaning. And indeed she would not have thought of putting Mr. Deeping about to such an extent, for it was always her wish to give people the full amount of what they paid for, only the cause at Gros-mont Road required so much keeping up, and Mr. Mallinson's hand was almost always in his pocket for bazaars, or tea-trays, or guineas for the plate when he took the chair at public meetings, which he was so very

frequently called upon to do, being, as she might say, such a leading man in the congregation. And a great proof of respect, too, and she always felt proud to see him standing behind that table on the Grosmont Road platform, surrounded by the other more influential members of the congregation, and in his best suit, too, with one hand behind him, and the other holding the notes of his speech, which always began—

“My Christian friends. In acknowledging the honour which you have done me in calling me to the chair on this interesting occasion.”

At that stage of the proceedings Mrs. Malinson's feelings generally overcame her, and she was obliged to bury her face in her pocket-handkerchief, their pew being in such a conspicuous situation, and the eyes of the

congregation being, as she might say, upon her. Of course that sort of thing was very pleasant, and she liked to see her husband's name in the bills, and on the great placards by the chapel gates; but at the same time it ran away with a great deal of money, and the business not being quite so good as it used to be—not from providential judgment, nothing of the kind—but only because trade was rather flat in Oresbridge just now, it really behoved people to make a little extra profit when the chance came in their way. And as the lady and her daughter only required the use of the room for a few hours, just a late dinner when they came in, and a cup of coffee when they returned from the ball, and breakfast next morning before they went back again to Grantford; scarcely a day altogether, she thought that in consideration of all the

kindness that had been shown him since he came to Canton House, Mr. Deeping need not complain.

So the house underwent a complete purification; carpets up, curtains down, front windows painted, new blinds fitted, furniture rubbed till it shone again, and the whole place made to look like a new pin, quite outshining for beauty and freshness anything done by Mrs. Green, who also made a very feeble effort to take in company at the county ball, but only succeeded in getting a stray gentleman or two, who were not so particular as ladies about their accommodation, and who perhaps had been sent to her just at the last moment from the over-full hotel on the other side of the road.

The last of these preparations was scarcely completed, and Mrs. Mallinson in her black

silk gown and fuschia cap had just seated herself in the front window to watch for the company, when a cab drove up to the door. Out of it there alighted a tall, rather ponderous lady of about five-and-fifty, elegantly but quietly dressed; and after her a young girl, dark-haired, rosy-cheeked, whose dainty little silver-mounted reticule bore the inscription—Rose Beresford.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was the night of the county ball. The streets of Oresbridge were noisy with the crested carriages of the county people, who came from many an old baronial hall and storied castle, to bring their point lace and family diamonds to this, the one select assemblage of Oresbridge high life. The other balls were for anyone who had wealth enough to make a splendid appearance at them; this was exclusively for the county families and their friends.

Could Hugh Deeping have stood at the window of his sitting-room to-night, he would certainly not have complained of the dulness

of Grosmont Road; for the usual prospect of milk-girls and penny piemen, singing women and white-pinaforesd beggar children, was varied now by glitter of equipages, within which the gaslight flashing into them from the shop windows, revealed sheen of satin and glow of scarlet draperies, with sparkle of jewelled tiara on many a stately head, or gleam of ivory fans toyed with by white-gloved hands, which would by-and-by be clasped in the dance with those of uniformed officers or aristocratic civilians.

But Hugh was not looking out of his sitting-room window to-night. Better for him, perhaps, if he had been. Better if Mrs. Beresford and her daughter Rose had never chanced to come to the county ball, or coming, had spent their spare time elsewhere than in that front room of his. Tired at

last of Mrs. Mallinson's interminable paragraphs, and Sarah Matilda's pretty common-places, and having no other companions in Oresbridge with whom he could spend his evening, he strolled down that quiet country road into which his steps seemed almost to turn by instinct, and scarce thinking whither he went, rambled on and on until the lights from the windows of the old house at Lyneton Abbots flickered down upon him through the bare elm-tree boughs.

That was a busy night at Lyneton Abbots, too, for Jeanie and her aunt were going with Mr. Lyneton to the ball. It was Jeanie's first introduction into the fashionable world, and, girl-like, she had spent many wondering thoughts over it. For they lived such a very quiet, secluded life in that old-fashioned home. Once in four or five

months Mr. Lyneton gave a formal dinner, to which the clergyman and some of the county people came—people who were in the habit of going to London for the season, and therefore had a little to say of how things were stirring there. And when the return dinners were given, the rumbling family chariot, so seldom used now, was drawn up in front of the stone doorway, and Jeanie stood by, looking admiringly on, whilst Miss Lyneton, with her mother's diamonds glittering on her velvet dress, used to take her brother's arm, and sweep across the matted hall, just as the Lyneton ladies might have done centuries ago, when the fortunes of the family were in their prime. But that was all Jeanie knew of gay life. She had never been in a ball-room, never glided white-robed through quadrille after

quadrille, keeping time to the strains of merry dance-music, while all round and about her there floated the hum of soft voices and scent of flowers, mingled with the bright smiles of the dancers, and low-whispered words, which could so lightly be spoken, and so lightly be forgotten. Jeanie knew nothing of this, and now for the first time she was going to see it all.

She stood by her dressing-table in one of those old dormer-windowed rooms, twisting a spray of ivy-leaves in her hair. They contrasted prettily enough with its pale brown tresses, so like those of the first Mrs. Lynton's cousin, but shadowing a face so different; for Gwendoline's even, level brows and straight Grecian features, told of steady purpose, and quiet, controlled will. Her face seldom changed from its pale stillness into

the rosy flush of bright expectancy; whilst Jeanie's was variable as the surface of some wind-stirred lake, yet ever when the breeze had passed, true mirror of blue sky and fleecy cloud and purple bloom of sunset.

With genuine girl-like eagerness she had come up to prepare long before the time of starting; and when the last finishing touches had been given, and the folds of her white dress looped up by the maid's skilful hands with clusters of ivy leaves and berries, and when the full flowing cloak, with its dainty garniture of white fur, had been put on, and the fan, and tablets, and tiny perfumed handkerchief all laid ready, there remained still a full hour to the time when Mr. Lyneton had ordered the carriage to come round. So she went downstairs to the oriel room, deserted now, except by Rollo, the

.

Newfoundland dog, who was stretching himself, with the leisurely laziness of advanced life, on the hearthrug.

With a warm, pleasant glow, the firelight shone upon the carved oak furniture, and lighted up the old family portraits, which, in all the glory of ruffs, and powder, and court suits, hung upon the wainscoted walls. Just so pleasantly had it shone there two months ago, when she and Hugh Deeping—none but they two—had read that ballad of the “Nut-Browne Mayde,” and then, in a silence sweeter far than speech, had learned that it was true.

Two months ago. And life held so many golden memories for them since then. Memories which brightened all Hugh's daily toil, and made the hours pass for Jeanie in a music so sweet that, listening to it, she took

no count of time. Not memories of quiet walks together, or solitary half hours, in which, hand to hand, and heart to heart, they might hold sweet speech of years to come. Not once in all that two months had Hugh and Jeanie been alone together again. But there were still those Saturday evening readings, when she knew so well the story was for her; when, in quaint rhyme of olden poet, Hugh told her all that he would fain have said, and she listened with a smile whose meaning Gwendoline guessed as little as Jeanie knew the wherefore of that other smile which came sometimes upon her aunt's face for hope of Maurice Demeron's return.

But she was soon tired of waiting in the oriel-room, and the old clock, chiming from the staircase, told that there wanted still half an hour to the time of starting; so, wrap-

ping her cloak round her, she stole out into the doorway to wait there.

Hugh, standing under the old stone griffins, saw her there, the little white figure, like some fay or fairy, hovering in the track of light that poured out from the wide hall into the garden; the ivy-leaves and berries glistening in her hair, one little gloved hand gathering up the folds of her cloak, the fair young face bending forward into the gloom with such a look of eager, girlish longing.

Jeanie, the little Jeanie who belonged to him, so near, yet so far off, whose hand his own must thrust so much aside to reach. He knew that in another hour's time the thousand lights of the Oresbridge Assembly Rooms would be shining down on that bright head; he knew that Martin Allington would be asking her to dance—Martin Allington,

the nephew of a baronet, rich, handsome, nobly born, with a comfortable rectory waiting for him as soon as his university course was over. He had heard it all discussed, for Mrs. Mallinson had acquaintances in the village who could tell her plenty of Lyneton Abbots gossip, and young Mr. Allington had not gone in and out of that gateway where Hugh now stood, and accompanied the ladies from time to time in their daily walks, and at church turned aside from his prayer-book so often to gaze on Jeanie's quiet, unconscious face, without the people drawing their own conclusions therefrom, and giving those conclusions the full benefit of open discussion.

She would be dancing with Martin Allington, then, and other courtly gentlemen would smile upon her, and flatter her, and whisper sweet words into her ear, whilst he, Hugh

Deeping, went back to his little room in Grosmont Road, his little room over the provision-dealer's shop, with its imitation Venetian blinds, and its make-believe maple furniture, and its sham Parian statuettes, and its everlasting smell of coffee and bacon. What a difference! And Hugh began to feel, almost more than he had ever felt before, the cold crystal barrier of caste shining up between them.

Yet he was not afraid. He could have trusted that Jeanie of his anywhere and everywhere. He could have let her go from him, away out of that quiet home into the busiest, gayest life, feeling that she would come back to him again true as ever, not a single leaf fallen from the fair flower of her love. Or, if he had to go to the world's end, and toil there for many a year, he knew that, returning, he would find her faithful still;

such trust he had in her, so truly did that fearless look of hers tell all that words had never spoken.

And still Jeanie stood there in the open doorway, looking out into the gloom, her white cloak wrapped around her, the ivy-leaves glistening in her light hair. Hugh Deeping could not stay any longer at the gate. Very gently he stole across the garden, and coming behind her, laid his hand upon her shoulder.

She looked brightly up into his face.

"You did not startle me so very much. I was thinking about you."

There was no need to hide that now; no fear for him to know where her thoughts could find so sure a rest.

"You look very beautiful, Jeanie—may I call you Jeanie? You know, I have never seen you like this before."

And Hugh glanced down at her dainty, white-robed figure, too pure it almost seemed for touch of his; this little high-born maiden, whose beauty was the outflowing of centuries of culture. And then he thought of himself, rich only in his own strong right hand and cunning brain, in power of thought and strength of will to do and bear.

"Jeanie," he said, "you seem too far away from me."

But Jeanie only answered with a low, musical laugh, and just one bright look, which made him take that gloved hand and hold it to his lips for a single moment.

They were still standing there in the open doorway, beneath the statue of Abbot Siward, who spoke no word of all that he heard and saw from that niche of his, when Miss Lyneton came sweeping down

the broad staircase, in all her cool, lustrous beauty.

And very beautiful she did look, though not for the diamonds that were shining among the folds of her pale yellow hair, nor yet for the costly lace which many and many a Lyneton lady had worn with as much grace as she wore it now. Nor was it the thought of any conquest to be achieved that evening at the county ball, or any admiration to be won from the brilliant company there, that brought a light into the usually quiet grey eyes, and a touch of rose into the pale cheeks. Last time she went to the Oresbridge county ball, five years ago, Maurice Demeron had been there. Next time she went, he would be home again; for were not the trees just ready to bud now? And long before their leaves fell his ship would have sailed.

Half way down the staircase she paused. In the track of light outside the door, she could see the gleam of Jeanie's white dress. Impatient child! Was she so eager, then, to be dancing with Martin Allington, that she must needs away, so lightly clad, into the March gloom to wait for the carriage? And yet Gwendoline remembered that she had waited as impatiently herself five years ago. She was just hastening forward to call her in out of the cold, when she caught sight of Hugh Deeping.

Hugh Deeping and her niece, Jeanie, standing together; her hand in his, her face downcast for the earnest look he bent upon it. And was that a flush of gladness that it wore, or pride, the old Lyneton pride, kindling on her cheek, because he, so lowly born, dared to speak to her thus? In that flickering light Gwendoline could not tell.

She drew back a step or two; then with lips more tightly closed than was their wont, and with a grave, steady look, she came downstairs into the oriel room.

When her niece joined her five minutes after, to say the carriage was waiting, Miss Lyneton stood by the fire drawing on her gloves. And as she smoothed down Jeanie's hair, and arranged those glistening ivy-leaves, and said, "You are thoughtless, Jeanie, to stand out in the cold so long—" no one could have heard a touch of anger in her voice. For it was not the way of the Lyneton people to make much ado over anything.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE county ball was a very brilliant affair, the most successful that had been held for many years, so the Oresbridge papers said next day. Of course the Oresbridge papers meant, by that, that "dancing was kept up with great spirit until an early hour in the morning," that "supper was provided by Messrs. Blank and Blank, with their usual taste and elegance," that "the decorations, which were under the management of Messrs. Someone else, were of the most exquisite description," that "the dresses were splendid, the music superb, and the assemblage of rank, beauty and fashion, such as had rarely been gathered before in

those Assembly Rooms." That was what the Oresbridge papers meant when they said the county ball was so very successful.

But it produced results in another direction which either might or might not be considered successful, according to taste.

Almost the first people that the Lyneton Abbots party met, were Mr. Allington and his uncle, Sir William Allington, of Barton Firs, with whom he was to return to town next week, having completed his course of reading with the Rector. And then, greatly to their surprise, they encountered Mrs. Beresford and her daughter Rose.

Rose, Jeanie's child friend, the only child friend she had ever had. Little Miss Rose, who, the last time they parted, was a mischievous, hoydenish girl of eleven or twelve, notable for tearing her frocks, and playing

pranks with old Grey the serving-man, and jumping over the stone dolphins, or sitting upon them and composing romantic stanzas which never could be brought to a successful termination. Mischievous now, too; if one might judge from the merry sparkle in her bright dark eyes, only a different sort of mischief, more fatal, perhaps, than the other. But not hoydenish at all. She had grown into a tall, elegant girl, with a singular fascination in her manners, a mingling of archness and playfulness, which, being completely her own, sat very gracefully upon her. Indeed, amongst all the high-born beauties, blonde and brunette, who thronged the Oresbridge Assembly Rooms on that night of the county ball, none excited more attention or won more admiration than Miss Beresford, the young Irish lady, who now showed

her smiles, and scattered her bright looks there for the first time.

Of course it was a very happy meeting. Rose, who never made any pretence of concealing her feelings under the garb of aristocratic self-possession, was overjoyed at meeting her old friend again so unexpectedly. It really was such a very unlooked for pleasure. Indeed it was by the merest chance that her mamma had come to the ball at all, only they had had such a stupid, dull life for the last three months out there at Grantford, where Mrs. Beresford had taken apartments for the sake of the vapour baths, being somewhat of an invalid; and Rose felt as if she could not endure any longer without seeing a little society beyond the very limited circle, chiefly valetudinarians and elderly widows, that they met with out there.

And so she persuaded her mamma to accept the invitation, and for once make a little effort to rouse herself. For, as Rose said, she did so enjoy a ball now and then, it was the only chance she had of seeing fresh people, and getting a little of the rust and dulness rubbed off. Life at Grantford was such a terribly stupid affair, so very different to Dublin, where they spent last winter. There was such a delightful succession of gaieties in Dublin. One need never spend an evening at home there, unless from choice.

And then Mrs. Beresford and Rose took possession of Jeanie, leaving Mr. Lyneton and his sister Gwendoline to their own devices for a season.

Not a very long season. Scarcely half an hour could have elapsed before the portly

Irish lady chaperoned Jeanie back again to that sheltered arcade near the supper-room, where Mr. and Miss Lyneton were engaged in earnest conversation. Yet long enough for many plans to have been discussed, and some things decided upon, which should place matters upon quite a different footing at Lyneton Abbots.

Jeanie danced once with Mr. Allington, in the same quadrille with Miss Lyneton and Sir William. Gwendoline watched her closely. She seemed bright and happy, pleased rather than otherwise with the preference which he took no pains to conceal. And when, after the quadrille was over, Sir William took her under his wing, and, in company with his nephew, sauntered about the room, she chatted in just her own simple girlish way, first to one, and then to an-

other of them, seeming to enjoy the novelty of the scene, and to enter into it as completely as if her whole heart was there. Surely that meeting which, an hour or two ago, Miss Lyneton had so unwittingly and unwillingly witnessed, had been of Hugh Deeping's seeking, and his only!

After that the Lyneton people, Mrs. Beresford and Rose, with young Martin Allington and his uncle, made a little coterie by themselves in one of the cool, evergreen-decorated arcades, and there chatted away merrily enough, whilst the dancers floated past them. Miss Lyneton arranged that Mrs. Beresford and Rose were to come to Lyneton Abbots next day, to spend a short time before they returned to Grantford, which arrangement Rose entered into with animated delight. She should be so glad, she said,

to escape even for a few days from dull stupid old Grantford, where they saw nobody from morning to night but invalids and elderly widows; and it would be such a pleasure to her to see a little more of dear Jeanie. She should have been so sorry to have gone back to Ireland without meeting her again; for though so many years had passed since they used to play together in the old garden at Lyneton Abbots, yet she had not forgotten those happy days, and nothing would please her so much as having the opportunity of talking them over quietly and leisurely. Though—and this remark was of Mrs. Beresford's making, and she made it with a meaning smile, seeing that the three persons most interested in it were amusing themselves quite out of hearing—she was afraid Rose would not have the

opportunity of seeing very much more of her young friend in the old home.

For, as Miss Beresford said to her mamma as they returned from the ball that night, or rather, early in the morning, young Mr. Allington was so very marked in his attentions. It was quite evident that if an understanding had not already taken place between them, it was close at hand. And judging from Sir William's manner, no opposition need be expected from that quarter; indeed, he seemed to have appropriated Jeanie already as his future niece, and paid her almost as much attention as the younger gentleman did. It would be an excellent match, Rose said, for they were acquainted with Sir William by report, and everyone knew that Mr. Martin was his favourite nephew, and would most likely come in for

the fine estate of Barton Firs, to say nothing of the living which was waiting for him there, filled up for the present by a temporary supply until such time as the young man should be ready to enter upon it. A very good match indeed, and little Miss Jeanie might consider herself fortunate above most high-born maidens whose purses were not quite in keeping with their social position.

And then Mrs. and Miss Beresford began to wonder, as, indeed, people very often did wonder, how it was that Miss Lyneton had never married. Certainly not for lack of admirers, for everyone knew how often her hand had been sought by people who could have given her a much more splendid home than that crumbling old Manor-house at Lyneton Abbots. So beautiful, too, with the pale,

colourless, yellow-haired Lyneton beauty, which had been sung of in so many an old English ballad, and which had impressed Mrs. Beresford as being so very striking when she happened to meet Miss Gwendoline in passing through Oresbridge three or four years ago. And so very distinguished in her appearance. It was so seldom one saw those level brows, and that straight, perfect Grecian profile. It quite marked a person out from the usual class, even of beautiful women, though Rose could not say whether she would change her own dark, wavy hair, and rose and lily complexion, even for the marble loveliness of Miss Lyneton, of Lyneton Abbots. Some people admired brilliance of colour even more than perfectness of form. And then Miss Lyneton was so very quiet, quiet beyond her years; for women at five and twenty were

not expected to take all the sedateness of middle-age upon them, nor quite withdraw themselves from those gallant little attentions which were always so willingly offered to beauty and distinction.

And then Rose, still in the white splendour of her ball-room costume, leaned her rounded arms upon the dressing-table of Mrs. Mallinson's bed-room, and pondered upon her own bright and changeful features, rich with the bloom of youth, and quick with the smile of conscious beauty. And she thought that such a face as looked out upon her from the maple-framed mirror was better than Miss Lyneton's chiselled perfectness, or the fair, gentle simplicity of the little Jeanie. Certainly it was more fascinating, and always produced a more brilliant impression. Rose was content.

It was Martin Allington who folded Jeanie's cloak around her, and led her to the carriage. And when he asked permission to inquire after them next morning, it was Mr. Lyneton who smiled a courteous permission. They were always glad, he said, to see Mr. Allington at Lyneton Abbots.

And so the Oresbridge County Ball passed over.

CHAPTER IX.

BUT long after Jeanie, unconscious of any clouds which might be gathering over her happy future, slept quietly enough in her own room; long after grey dawnlight had crept up over the old house at Lyneton Abbots, waking the sparrows that nestled all night in the ivy-covered gables, and winning from them a faint little chirp of greeting to the yet unrisen sun, Miss Lyneton and her brother sat by the fireside in the oriel-room, thinking, not of the gay scene which they had just left, nor of the admiration which fair little Jeanie had won there; thinking only how they might save her from what

they felt would be a life-long degradation, and their noble name from the first stain upon its hitherto unsullied brightness.

Gwendoline Lyneton loved her brother's only child very much. With almost a parent's care she had watched over her during those years in which she had grown from happy childhood into the beauty and grace of the Lyneton maidens. She would have mourned with a sadness which, had it been spent upon grief of her own, would have appeared vain and selfish, anything which threatened to bring a cloud upon Jeanie's life. She had done her best to shield that life hitherto, and she meant so to shield it to the end. If her power could have equalled her will, this young girl, the last of the noble Lyneton race, should have been the happiest too. But dearer even than happiness she held the honour

of the name which her niece bore. For that honour, if need be, she could have given up the life of her own life, even Maurice Demeron's love; for that honour she would have felt it her duty to crush the spring and freshness out of any man's life who dared to lay a touch upon it.

And Jeanie's happiness was not at stake now. So said Gwendoline Lyneton and her brother, as in the early dawn of the March morning they held close converse there in the old oriel room. The child was young, and all her life lay before her; fair, and many would woo her. And if this Hugh Deeping, this obscurely-born clerk, who, having thoughts a little above his station, and a fine voice, and a frank, pleasant manner, had used these advantages to entangle his employer's daughter, had caused her so far to forget her dig-

nity and the respect due to her position, as to grant him stolen interviews, to loiter in the garden hand in hand with him, as she had been seen loitering only a few short hours ago, it could surely be but a passing fancy, which would fleet away as quickly as sunset glow from the old tower of St. Hilda's church. There need be no anxiety, then, for Jeanie's happiness, no fear that any love of hers had fallen so far out of its place. Besides, had she not seemed happy and contented when Martin Allington was dancing with her? Had not her face been bright with smiles all through that brilliant night? And though, beside Rose Beresford, she might appear quiet and even thoughtful, it was but the overpowering glitter of the one that seemed to give shadow to the other; just as a pure, fair moonbeam stealing into some artificially-

lighted room, shows cold and pale by the glare of its chandeliers? No, truly there need be no fear for Jeanie's happiness. It was in her own keeping yet, or if not in her own keeping after all Martin Allington's sweet looks and sweeter words, safe in the care of one who would treasure it as his own. For was not young Allington a brave and honourable man, of descent well nigh as lofty as their own? And what was given to the nobly born, or promised by them, was kept with a pure faith, which these upstarts from the mob of mediocrity could never dream of. Jeanie's happiness would be as safe with Martin Allington, as Gwendoline Lyneton's with that soldier lover of hers in the far East.

But there must be no more Saturday evening readings of old heroic legends and love-ballads in this oriel room, no more standing

outside that doorway for tender speech between the high-born Lyneton maiden, and an obscure clerk whose only heritage was his own over-brilliant ambition. Jeanie must go away from Lyneton Abbots for a little season, until this romantic fancy, even if it deserved the name of fancy, should have passed over. Although the young girl was safe enough, there was no need to place her in the way of temptation, no need to ruffle the quietness of her life by any idea of watching or *espionage*, such as must be exercised so long as Hugh Deeping came to the house on that most urgent business of overlooking the plans and accounts.

Miss Hildegard Lyneton, the spinster aunt who resided with them before the first Mrs. Lyneton's time, and whose jealousy for the honour of the family was as watchful as

even her niece's or Mr. Lyneton's, should be told of the state of things, and advised to send for Jeanie to visit her in London. This could easily be accomplished, for Aunt Hildegarde had often wished her grand-niece to spend a few months with her at the old family house in Eaton Square, and especially now, when the young girl was of an age to make it important that she should mix in other society than was within reach in the quiet village of Lyneton Abbots, where even the best class of people were so far beneath their own rank of life. Indeed, Mr. Lyneton had already given his consent for Jeanie to go to her aunt in May, and this would but hasten the visit a very few weeks.

Then to fill up her place, for Mr. Lyneton, though anxious enough to remove his young daughter from the reach of harm,

would miss her sweet voice and pleasant ways about the house, Rose Beresford might be invited to extend her proposed visit from a few days to a month. True, Rose was no companion for Mr. Lyneton or his sister, having been accustomed to such a completely different life from theirs ; but still she was a bright, merry, warm-hearted girl, accomplished, and conversable, very brilliant in society, and possessing an admirable tact for adapting herself to different people. She would keep them from being dull at Lyneton Abbots until this little disagreeableness had worn itself away, and Jeanie could be sent for again with perfect safety.

That London visit would be a pleasant arrangement, at any rate, for young Martin Allington, for he had but a few days before asked, and received Mr. Lyneton's consent to

woo his daughter. And though he had won no promise from Jeanie yet, and though he could not tell by word or look of hers that the love he gave was cared for, yet Martin knew that he was rich, and handsome, and fascinating, and since most girls were caught by these things, it would be strange if Jeanie were quite insensible to them. He was going up to London, too, very shortly with his uncle, Sir William Allington, of Barton Firs, and Sir William and Miss Hildegarde Lyneton were old friends, and often exchanged visits when the Baronet happened to be staying in town. So that Martin had a clear course before him. Things could not have fallen out better for his suit.

Perhaps Mr. Lyneton thought of this too when he proposed to his sister Gwendoline that Aunt Hildegarde should be written

to. For in his quiet, reserved way, he loved Jeanie very much, and he would fain see her comfortably settled in life before his turn came to leave it. The Lynetons were not a long-lived race. Those old monuments in St. Hilda's church told that plainly enough to anyone who had patience to read the dates upon them. He might not have many years to live, then, and though to part with his only child, even to a brave, good-hearted young fellow like Martin Allington, would cost him more than he cared to tell, yet it was better so than that he should die and leave her alone in the old home. Alone, for he could not tell that his sister Gwendoline would be always minded to stay there, and be a mother to his child.

And then they talked of how the brilliant sights of London, its never-ending succession

of gaieties, amusements, new faces, new friendships, new associations, would help to chase away from Jeanie's mind any lingering thought of what she had left behind. For Gwendoline remembered how all these things had dazzled and enchanted her when she went to stay for a month or two with Aunt Hildegarde one summer-time, just before Maurice Demeron came down to Lyneton Abbots for the shooting.

Then Gwendoline's thoughts strayed away to sweet September days, so far off now, when under the leaves of the Lyneton Abbots woods she had first learned how bright and happy a thing life may be. Strayed forward, too, to other September days, not so far off, when the long waiting should be over, and the glory and the beauty of the old time should come back again. For it

was such a little while, only until these leaves, that were just unfolding now, should have browned, and faded, and fallen. Six months! And for one who has waited patiently six years, that does not seem long.

Yes, Jeanie would soon forget. Even if she had anything to hold to, hers was not a nature to hold resolutely to it. She was just at that age when outward circumstances exert a very strong influence; when no sorrow sinks for ever into the soul. She might feel sad for a day or two, until she got accustomed to the new sights and sounds of the great city. She had never been so far from home before—indeed, never been from home at all, and of course London would seem very strange to her at first. But then the new life would soon more than fill up any blank which the removal of the old one might

cause. She would be very happy with Aunt Hildegarde. She would learn to love Martin Allington—handsome, genial, kindhearted Martin Allington. She would come home again after a few weeks, with no remembrance of that former fancy, no thought of Hugh Deeping, save that he had a pleasant voice and had helped to pass away some otherwise dreary evenings in the old house at Lyneton Abbots.

So Graham Lyneton and his sister said to each other as they sat by the fireside in the oriel room, just under that dormer window whose shadow was even then lying upon the chancel end of St. Hilda's church—the church where so many Lyneton people were sleeping quietly enough beneath their carved stone canopies.

CHAPTER X.

MR. LYNETON wrote that same morning to Aunt Hildegarde, telling her how matters stood at Lyneton Abbots, and suggesting that Jeanie's proposed visit should take place at once. To which letter there came by return of post a reply, stating that Miss Hildegarde Lyneton would come down herself next day, and after remaining at the Manor-house one night, take her niece up to town with her. Aunt Hildegarde was a person of great decision of character, and where the honour of the family was at stake, could act with a promptitude and de-

spatch which even a prime minister need not have been ashamed of.

She was very kind, too, in her way, and promised that nothing should be wanting in amusement or society to render Jeanie's visit both pleasant and successful. This last word was underlined, intimating, though no other reference was made to the subject, how fully Aunt Hildegarde comprehended the nature of the trust which had been committed to her, and how conscientiously she would fulfil it.

The day after the ball, Mrs. Beresford and her daughter Rose left their apartments at No. 19, Grosmont Road, and, instead of returning to the stupid little county town of Grantford, where they had been spending the winter, came to Lyneton Abbots for a short visit, carrying with them Mrs. Mallinson's good wishes and blessings. For, as she said,

they were the best lodgers she had ever had, so very liberal in their payments, and so perfectly satisfied with everything that was done for them, and not at all above a little pleasant chat with herself when she went upstairs to wait upon them. Indeed, much more free and friendly in that respect than Mr. Deeping himself, who never manifested the least desire for anything like friendly conversation if she happened to go into the room to see that the gas was not turned up too high, or that the furniture was properly dusted. And Mrs. Mallinson hoped that if ever they came to any of the Oresbridge balls again, they would patronise her apartments, for she should always do her utmost to please them; and, besides, having been accustomed ever since her husband took the business in Grosmont Road, to ball company,

she knew what that sort of people wanted, more perhaps than parties who were not accustomed to anything of the kind. Certainly more than Mrs. Green, poor thing! who felt herself so wonderfully set up if she got a stray gentleman from one of the hotels at the time of the county ball. Poor Mrs. Green knew nothing at all about attending to people of that sort, and having their coffee ready for them when they came home, and speaking genteelly to them, as the quality always expected to be spoken to, Mrs. Mallinson said.

Rose Beresford was a very beautiful girl, though that was never the word which anyone used in describing her. There was a sort of luring grace about her, a playful witchery, half saucy, half shy, which no one could explain, only feel it and be conquered by it. She had the rare beauty so seldom seen but

in Irish women, of rose and lily bloom of complexion, heightened by jet-black hair and long dark eyelashes, which made the blue eyes beneath them seem almost black too, so deep was the shadow in which they shone and sparkled. A great contrast to Miss Lyneton's still, statuesque beauty, which rarely lighted up into animation, which was like the sculptured perfection of the Greek faces one sees in art galleries, pale, passionless, but holding such terrible power of earnestness fast bound under all their calm. Rose's face was never the same two minutes together. It changed like an April day, except that no black clouds ever passed over it, only shadow enough to make the brightness seem brighter when it came back again. And in all her ways there was a piquant playfulness, full blossom of that girlish fun which made little

Rose Beresford one of the maddest, merriest, most mischievous of children, the terror of poor old gardener Grey, who declared that she almost plagued the life out of him with her wild freaks.

No danger of Lyneton Abbots going to sleep whilst Rose stayed there. Rather, Gwendoline might fear lest she should bring too much life into the quiet Manor-house, where six years ago gardener Grey's little torment used to play such merry pranks. For she was running over with life and brightness still. She would tell funny stories by the hour together, and mimic the peculiarities of people she had met, with a raciness which made even the grave Mr. Lyneton smile. And as for her tales of Irish wit and humour, even Rollo himself might have been supposed to understand them, with such mute

wonderment did he look up into her face when, with ringing, musical laugh, she went through one after another of them. Surely Miss Gwendoline Lyneton might have searched far and wide for another visitor so bright and gamesome, and mirth-provoking as this Rose Beresford.

Gwendoline never spoke to her niece of what she had seen as she came downstairs on the night of the county ball. Nor, when Hugh Deeping's name was mentioned by Mr. Lyneton in Jeanie's presence, did she by any added coldness of look or manner betray the scorn into which her previous kindly indifference towards him had passed. That could have done no good. It could only have made a painful consciousness between them, and brought a shade of bitterness into the unbroken friendship which they

had hitherto felt for each other. That scene could not be recalled. Both Mr. Lyneton and his sister had determined that it should not be repeated, and therefore it might safely be let alone. Gwendoline had too much confidence in her niece's honour to think for one moment that even if Jeanie wished it, she would hold any intercourse with Hugh Deeping unknown to her father. She was warm-hearted, generous, perhaps a little impulsive, but she was a Lyneton still, and as a Lyneton, her aunt could trust her never to stoop by mean, dishonourable deeds, from the lofty pureness in which they had always lived.

Gwendoline was right in that same confidence. She need not fear.

Neither was anything said to Jeanie about the new arrangement which had been made

with Miss Hildegarde Lyneton about that visit to London. She knew that she was to go some time during the summer, and stay for some weeks with Aunt Hildegarde, for that had been already talked of, even before Hugh Deeping ever began to come to Lyneton Abbots. The mere altering of the date was a matter calling for little remark. Aunt Hildegarde often changed her plans. It might be more convenient to receive her niece now than later in the season—that was all Jeanie need know. All, indeed, that she ought to know. For to acquaint her with the reason of her sudden departure would be to frustrate its intention. If she did care for Hugh Deeping,—though that was simply an impossibility,—to lecture her about it, and then send her away, would only make her care for him more, by magnifying the affair

into needless importance. On the other hand, if she did not care for him, and he was only endeavouring by these underhand means to win her regard, then the very acknowledgment of the danger would make it more dangerous.

And so, when the letter arrived from Aunt Hildegarde, announcing her intention of coming down to Lyneton Abbots that same evening, and taking Jeanie back with her to town on the following day, no explanation was made beyond the one which she had herself given, namely, that it would be more convenient to have her young niece now than later in the summer, as she had some thought of joining a party of friends on the Continent after May.

If Mr. Lyneton and his sister watched Jeanie closely before that letter of Aunt

Hildegarde's came, they watched her still more closely afterwards, to note, if possible, any expression of disappointment or regret, any passing shade of sadness, from which they might gather that she was grieved to go away so soon. True, such sadness could never have altered their firm resolve, never have made either of them swerve from what they considered to be their duty. Still, it would have made their own hearts sad to think that they were saddening hers, and so it was with a feeling of infinite relief that they marked how cheerfully, and even brightly, she heard of this sudden change in her hitherto quiet life.

Except for that little *tableau vivant* which would not let itself be forgotten, Gwendoline Lyneton could almost have thought that all her fears were groundless, all her watchful

foresight without the slightest need. For when Mr. Lyneton brought Aunt Hildegarde's letter into the room where Jeanie and Rose Beresford were singing together, and said—"Jeanie, your aunt is coming here this evening, and wishes to take you back with her to-morrow. Can you be ready to go?" Jeanie had said, just as quietly as if the proposed expedition had been a morning walk, and not a two months' sojourn in the great world of London—

"Yes, papa; I suppose I can. Aunt Hildegarde is very kind. Only I shall be sorry to leave Rose so soon."

And then she had taken her part in the music again, with a voice clear and steady as ever. Nay, only a few minutes afterwards Gwendoline was sure she heard her niece's light laugh mingling with that of Rose Be-

resford. Doubtless that light-hearted maiden was telling some more of her funny stories, or perhaps singing one of those humorous songs which no one could listen to without almost tears of merriment, they were so brimming over with rich nonsense. And Gwendoline was never so thankful for the sound of Jeanie's laugh as when she heard it on the morning of the day that Aunt Hildegarde's letter came.

CHAPTER XI.

BUT when Rose had finished singing that nonsensical song, and when she had settled down to what was indeed a very unusual thing with her, half an hour's spell of reading, Jeanie stole away upstairs to her own room, and thought about that visit to London.

To-morrow, Friday, at noon! Then she should just miss the pleasant evening reading, and she should not see Hugh Deeping to say good-bye to him before she went. He would never even know that she was sorry to go away, for she could not leave any message for him. He would think, perhaps, that she was

glad to go—that she would rather be joining in all the gaiety of London life, rushing about under Aunt Hildegarde's chaperonage from ball to concert, and from concert to opera, night after night, than be living quietly on in that old Manor-house of Lyneton Abbots, looking forward to the one bright spot in all the week, the evening when he generally came in and read to them. As if anything in London could be so pleasant as that. As if all the concerts and operas in the world could be worth one reading of the "Nut-Browne Mayde," or even a single page of those dear old ballads that never seemed so full of music as when Hugh read them! Oh! if Aunt Hildegarde would only stay over Saturday, and let her say good-bye to Mr. Deeping—let her tell him that she did not mean to forget him through all that busy two months in London!

And yet what difference could that make, so long as they trusted each other. If, instead of Mr. Deeping coming as usual on Saturday afternoon, he had sent a message to say that he was going away for two months, would she have been very much grieved? Would she have trusted him any the less? Would his going away anywhere, for ever so long, make him not belong to her now? No, she was not afraid. There was no need to be afraid. Nothing, she was quite sure, except her own falseness or Hugh's, could part them from each other now. And that, she well knew, would never part them. She could trust Hugh Deeping as steadfastly as any of those beautiful ladies in the old ballads had trusted the knights who fought so bravely for them; as steadfastly as the "Nut-Browne Mayde" trusted her lover, even

when he seemed to change so sadly towards her.

Only it would have been so much pleasanter to have told him this, to have had just one little five minutes, as she might perhaps have had before he went away, or even to have looked him in the face, and told him in that look that she meant to remember him all through the long weeks of their parting. If Aunt Hildegard could but have stayed a little longer, until it was Hugh's time to come to Lyneton Abbots and help her papa with the accounts.

And then Miss Lyneton's voice was heard, calling her niece to get ready to drive into Oresbridge for a shopping expedition.

The expedition lasted some time, for Rose Beresford, who went with them too, wanted a song which had to be hunted out from

the very bottom of a great pile of music in the pianoforte warehouse, and there were commissions from Mrs. Beresford, who was going back to Grantford next day, and there were books to be ordered for Mr. Lyneton, and errands to the dressmaker and milliner on behalf of Jeanie herself, whose modest wardrobe was scarcely equal to the requirements of a two months' residence in town. So that it was quite late in the afternoon before they were on their way home again.

Hugh Deeping, coming from his duties at the Bellona iron-works, met the carriage just as it was turning into the Lyneton Abbots road.

There was a wistful look in Jeanie's eyes, and her face flushed a little as Hugh raised his hat to the ladies, and then passed on. She thought perhaps her aunt would have stopped the carriage and let her say good-bye to

Mr. Deeping, as she was going away for such a long time, and she turned to ask if they might not stay one moment.

But something in Gwendoline Lyneton's look stopped her. The slight, even brows were bent, the grey eyes had a cold gleam of displeasure in them, and the full lips were bent into a haughty, disdainful curve, which told plainly enough that Miss Lyneton was not in a mood to be interrupted just then. Jeanie turned away, grieved and wondering. It was seldom indeed such a look as that vexed the calm stillness of her aunt's face.

By-and-by Gwendoline said—and though the words were simple enough, there was a touch of harshness in her voice as she said them—

“I wish we had not staid out so late, Jeanie. You have had a little cold since the

ball night, when I saw you standing in the garden with only that thin cloak on."

That was enough. Jeanie understood the whole truth now. Her aunt's voice and face had told more than she meant they should. That look, then, was for Hugh Deeping, and Jeanie knew why she was going away so suddenly to London, instead of waiting, as she had expected to wait, until May. But she said nothing. It was her way, too, to be quiet. Only it seemed as if suddenly a new door had been opened in her life, and through it she could look out into joys and sufferings which had had no name for her before. That beautiful little seed-thought of love, which long ago had fallen so far down and so quietly into her heart, must bear other than the sweet flower of hope fulfilled. She, too, must learn to wait and be patient, as others had learned before her.

Rose Beresford, intent upon reading the words of her new song, did not see what was going on. But she did just catch a glimpse of Mr. Deeping as he passed them, and recognised him for the same young man who had gone out of Mrs. Mallinson's shop the afternoon of the ball. For there was something rather unconventional about Hugh Deeping's appearance. He dressed in a fashion peculiar to himself, not always following the prevailing mode so closely as he might have done, nor, as we have already seen, being quite so particular in the little niceties of Parisian collars and Persigny ties. Also, Rose remembered that he carried himself rather awkwardly, and had a way of setting his feet down which in rainy or dusty weather must be very detrimental to the tidy appearance of his boots. So that she easily recognised him again, even though she only

just saw him for a moment in passing. Perhaps some day, when the mood was upon her, she would amuse herself by mimicking his step and gait, for she had a truly wonderful faculty of imitation, and could throw even the gravest people into fits of merriment by her re-production of any little oddities which she happened to have witnessed.

After that, they had a very quiet drive. Rose was busy with her music, and neither Miss Lyneton nor her niece appeared inclined to keep up any conversation. When they reached the griffin-guarded gateway of Lyneton Abbots, Jeanie went up into her own room to superintend the packing of her wardrobe, and when that was done she leaned her arms upon the broad low window seat, and looked out through the thickening gloom to the black yew-trees in the churchyard. The

old churchyard, in which many a snowdrop had begun to spring for joy at the March sunshine, snowdrops and primroses too, with here and there a violet straying up among the gravestones.

She will not sigh or murmur as she sits there, though the smile is not quite so bright upon her face as it was last week at this time. And there is no sound of complaining in her voice, as, after awhile, she begins to repeat to herself in quiet under-tones, a stanza of the sweet old rhyme which often goes singing through her thoughts now:

“And though that I of ancestry
A baron's daughter be,
Yet have I proved how I you loved
A squyer of low degré.
And ever shall, whatsoe befall,
To dye therefore anone;
For in my mynde, of alle mankynde,
I love but you alone.”

Perhaps there is a little of the Lyneton steadfastness even about Jeanie. Perhaps time will show that she too can wait and suffer and be patient, as others of her race have done before her. Perhaps, as the granite of Gwendoline's pride keeps heaving up, hard and immovable, through all the velvet turf of her courtesy, so the strong soul of the buried Lynetons, maidens, wives, and mothers, who loved so truly and trusted so faithfully, may live still, dauntless as ever, in this young Jeanie, who is to go away to London to-morrow, without once saying good-bye to Hugh Deeping, or telling him that she is sorry to leave him.

CHAPTER XII.

AUNT HILDEGARDE came. Truly a stately woman, a gentlewoman of the old school, who looked as if she might have belonged to Lyneton Abbots when the place was in its prime, when those old oriel rooms had rustled with the sweep of brocaded dresses, and echoed to the tread of cavaliers in love-locks and slashed doublets. For she was so very tall and dignified, and that black satin gown of hers trailed so grandly, and her grey hair was raised in curl after curl upon her high forehead, making her seem even more imposing of stature. And in all her ways there was the measured

courtly grace of the ancient gentlewoman, slow, sedate of speech, grave of mien, dignified exceedingly.

Yet lurking behind her dignity there was a certain kindliness which promised fairly for Jeanie's happiness during that two months' visit to London. Aunt Hildegarde was never severe to any one who would obey her and be ruled by her, and give in to her supreme will in everything, as Jeanie seemed likely enough to do, being of a gentle, yielding disposition. She was only stern when her authority was questioned, or the honour of the Lyneton family set at nought. If Jeanie was submissive, if she could just put Hugh Deeping on one side and resolve to think no more about him, she might make a very pleasant thing of that two months in London.

For, as soon as Sir William Allington heard that Jeanie was going back to town with her aunt, he invited his old friend Miss Hildegarde Lyneton to bring her over to Barton Firs for a few days.

Barton Firs was a fine country-seat a few miles from London, surrounded by splendid woods, which would soon be putting on all their spring beauty. And the private grounds were very pleasant too. There was an archery ground and a lake for boating, and a winding stream with hazel-fringed banks, where Jeanie and young Martin Allington might fish for hours together, if so disposed, nor feel the time pass heavily. And within doors, to while away the long spring evenings, there was a library more than equal to Lyneton Abbots, with such store of books, ancient and modern ballads, legends, romances, fairy

tales; that having Martin Allington by her side, Jeanie need miss neither poem nor reader.

Miss Hildegarde Lyneton hoped great things from that visit to Barton Firs. It was the most fortunate arrangement, she said, that could have been made under the circumstances; for it would keep Jeanie's mind employed without being quite such a tax upon her strength as the gaiety of London life, nor such a violent contrast either to the extremely quiet life she had been accustomed to lead at Lyneton Abbots. Nothing could have been more pleasantly contrived, and she meant to accept Sir William's kind invitation, and take Jeanie out to the Firs as soon as ever she had recovered the fatigue of her journey.

So Jeanie went away with Aunt Hilde-

garde, to be put through a series of amusements and mild dissipations, which should effectually drive from her youthful mind any lingering fancy for this too-aspiring young clerk, this Mr. Deeping of the Bellona iron-works, who had thought to link with his ignoble fortunes the noble name and high degree of the old Lyneton Abbots' house.

A most unheard-of piece of assumption, Aunt Hildegarde said, as she talked it over with her nephew and Gwendoline the night before she went away. But the world had changed vastly since her young days, and if those who represented the grand knights and barons of centuries gone by did not look well to the sustaining of their honour, all the ancient landmarks of descent would be washed away by this continually rising tide

of commonalty, before which many a noble house had already fallen and perished. Mr. Lyneton had done well, very well, to lay his strong hand at once upon the evil and check it in its very outset. If others had done the same, instead of yielding to infirmity of purpose or pressure of circumstances, some names that she could mention would have a fairer escutcheon than they boasted now.

It was a cold frosty morning, towards the middle of March, when Aunt Hildegarde took her niece away. No sunshine to light up the dreary, neglected old garden, or to lie with golden touch on the crumbling, many-gabled mansion of Lyneton Abbots. And though it was noontime, the grey mists poured down from the hills, and the wind moaned dismally through the churchyard yew-

trees, as if with a sound of farewell. Gwendoline Lyneton might keep back the tears from her eyes, but she felt them at her heart, as she said good-bye to Jeanie there at the old stone gateway, the moss-bearded griffins looking down upon them meanwhile with grave, doubtful faces, as if they too knew, but would not tell, how much might come to pass before this farewell were changed for Jeanie's welcome home again.

But it was all for the best. As Gwendoline Lyneton and her brother stood there under the old gateway, bearing in their memories Jeanie's quiet, peaceful look as she waved a farewell to them and the old home, they felt as if the bitterest pain of parting must be to themselves, who were left behind, not to her who was going forth to new joys, treading they thought on the threshold

of a happier, brighter life than she could ever have known in that secluded village. It would all come right. It was all for the best. Besides, Jeanie had seemed so content to go. Earnestly as Gwendoline looked into her face, she read there no other regret than any loving heart might feel in parting even for a little while from the home where all its love is gathered up, to which all its memories belong. And with this thought they were fain to cheer themselves as they turned and went back to the old house, which seemed so empty now that Jeanie was away.

Mrs. Beresford set off to Grantford the same day, leaving Rose to keep Gwendoline and her brother company for a few weeks longer.

Rose was quite glad to stay. She loved change, even if it was from the dulness of a

second-rate country town to the scarcely less monotonous current of life in an old-fashioned country house, where a chance visitor seldom came to bring any tidings of how the world went on outside. She felt as if she had used up all the life in those quiet rooms at Grantford, where Mrs. Beresford, not being possessed of large means, had been obliged to deny herself and her daughter many even of the sober gaieties which of right belonged to people in their rank of life. They were unable to keep much company, or to go out often into society, or indeed to launch into any expenses which might trench upon the limited income of an officer's widow. Here, at any rate, there would be new faces to look at, and new characters to study, and the oddities of the village people to laugh at or imitate, and perhaps a ball or a con-

cert at Oresbridge now and then by way of a change, or an exceedingly quiet dinner-party amongst some of the county families of the neighbourhood. Enough, at any rate, to keep her from utter stagnation until May, when she was to spend a month in London, and then possibly take a turn at the seaside, or run over for a few weeks to her friends in Dublin, where there was always plenty of change and gaiety.

Between Gwendoline Lyneton and Rose Beresford there could never be anything but the merest surface friendship. One, intense of nature, quiet, self-contained; the other, exquisitely graceful in her shallowness, they could only touch each other in the pleasant courtesies of social life. Rose was a very bright companion, with a ready quickness of perception which could at once adapt itself

to varying moods and tempers. She had the tact sometimes not given to much finer, more generous natures than her own, of knowing when to speak, and when to be silent. And for this Gwendoline was glad to have her stay at the Manor-house. She was a pleasant companion for Mr. Lyneton. She would in some sort fill up the void caused by Jeanie's absence. Gwendoline knew well enough that she herself could never stand in Jeanie's place to her brother. Reserved, controlled by nature as well as habit, she could not unbend freely and reveal all her wealth of affection as Jeanie, younger and less tried, could do. And then a sister's love, faithful and tender though he had proved it to be, was not like a daughter's. Perhaps in bitter need and trial Gwendoline Lyneton could have done more for her bro-

ther than that fair young daughter of his ; in the ordinary needs of home life not so much.

This was not her fault. Since Maurice Demeron went abroad, six years ago, her life had been one long hiding away of the love which might not tell itself out in word or deed, which could only trust and be patient. Few could live a life like that, and be always ready for the pleasant affectionateness of home intercourse. Faith, that had to believe so much, and trust, which strove to hold fast through so many long years of waiting, must needs write their story sometimes on a face whose habitual expression was one of grave, quiet patience. That told the secret of many a lonely hour spent by Gwendoline Lyneton in the old house by the churchyard ; when, too proud to tell to

others the thoughts which yet she could not wholly bid away, she thought them out in a solitude where none could be saddened by any tears they brought. She could be enough for herself always. Enough for the needs of others she could not always be.

And that was why she wished Rose Beresford to stay. Not that the young girl's graceful, shallow nature could yield any satisfying companionship to her own, so strong in its quietness, so quiet in its strength, but that Rose's playful ways, and Rose's sweet voice, and Rose's merry raillery, always sparkling, but never wounding, might serve to gladden her brother's solitude when Jeanie was far away.

Jeanie, who was even now speeding along with Aunt Hildegard to the great city of London. No hand to fold Gwendoline's in

its tender clasp to-night, no lips to touch her own in that good-night kiss, which was now for the first time missed between them. Yet it was their own doing that the young girl had gone away—their own doing that for four long weeks—perhaps longer than that—she must listen to Rose Beresford's sparkle of merriment and nonsense, and bend her own rich mind to the level of that pretty frivolity which, though it might amuse for an hour or two, or serve to pass away a lonely evening now and then, or cheer up Mr. Lyneton when he came in weary and anxious with his many business cares, would soon grow burdensome when it had to be borne with day after day, and week after week.

Already the old Lyneton pride had begun to exact its stint of self-denial.

Gwendoline Lyneton might have to pay a bitterer price for it still before all its work was done.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT long day, the first day of Jeanie's absence, wore away, and the shadows of night gathered round about, and the stars peeped down one by one through the elm-trees in Lyneton Abbots garden, those old elm-trees on whose slender twigs the little leaflets were just swelling up, only waiting for April sunshine to smooth out all their folded treasures, and kiss them into green beauty. And far off upon the eastern sky could be seen the red glow of many a flaming tongue, shot up by the furnaces of the Bellona iron-works, where Hugh Deeping had been toiling hard all day.

But not toiling with the spring and energy which had kept him up for so many weeks past. He was sad at heart that day, for the strange coldness of the look which Miss Lyneton had cast upon him from those quiet grey eyes of hers, the day before. For there was no mistaking that look, the sudden chill of pride and scorn which had seemed to freeze all the gentleness out of her face when she caught sight of Hugh returning Jeanie's wistful greeting.

Somebody or something had ruffled Miss Lyneton's usual calmness; and, once ruffled, Hugh Deeping felt she would not easily forget or forgive. That look had stung him very much, though he could not guess its meaning, nor why it had been cast upon him. It was a look no brave and honourable man could meekly bear without demanding the wherefore

of its cold rebuke. Nay, even worse than rebuke, for rebuke would imply some charge, which might be met and repelled, at any rate explained; but this told simply of a lofty indifference, which neither asked nor cared for explanation or reconciliation.

What had he done that anyone should dare to look upon him with a glance which held so much of scorn as that? Was he not noble, and upright, and honourable, though no very courtly ancestors had given him their name and degree, though he had to toil patiently enough day by day with his own right hand and tired brain, to win the living which others inherited with no care or pain of theirs?

• Did that give them any right, though, to look down upon him? Did that make him less worthy to seek and hold their favour? Besides, had he done anything that he was

afraid for Miss Lyneton or her brother to know? Were not his hands white from all stain of bribe or falseness; whiter in that way, perhaps, than many which would have scorned to clasp them? Had he wronged these people in any way, or defrauded them in aught of their due? Indeed, had he not rather given much more than their due, labouring many an hour not for reward but love? Had he not given them the best he could give of time, and energy, and thought? Why, then, must he meet a look like that, a look before which a base man might well cringe, but which no honest man need tamely brook?

These thoughts stirred Hugh's heart as he plodded patiently on in that little counting-house at the Bellona iron-works, amidst the din of the hammers, and the clanking of feet upon metal-plated floors. And they vexed

him bitterly enough, for the hasty spirit within him was not yet taught to endure quietly, and wait patiently. Hugh had much to learn, and he might have to learn it in quite new and unlooked-for ways, before he was at all fit for that high standing-place towards which he laboured now ; before he could teach others the true wisdom, and tell them out of his own sad, yet lofty life, how to rule their own.

So that was a weary day for him. And wearily enough, too, it passed for Miss Lyneton, there in the crumbling old Manor-house of Lyneton Abbots, so quiet now that Jeanie's voice was no longer heard in it. There was many a lingering thought that day for Jeanie, many an unspoken wish for her coming home again. Only for Rose's sake Gwendoline was obliged to appear cheerful, and hide away any

private regret under, at least, the outward garb of pleasant social intercourse. It was no new thing for Gwendoline to do that. So much of her life had to be lived alone that she had learned to be silent over it, and not vex others with any sadness it might bring.

Rose was trying the new song which she had brought from Oresbridge the day before. There was a syren-like sweetness about Rose Beresford's voice when she sang; such rich, luring music. It seemed to tell out so much love and longing, so much glow and passion which a nature like hers, bright, shallow, unreflective, could never have felt for itself. Like many who charm the public by sweet melody, or stirring oratory, she awakened thoughts in others which had never touched her own heart, and gave them the key to a

life whose beauty and richness her own could never reach. She would sing the simplest little song with a tenderness and pathos which brought tears to the listener's eye; and then, almost before the last tones had died out, she would chase those tears away by some light strain, or turn them into laughter by the wildest, merriest, sauciest comic song, full of archness and humour; to be in its turn replaced by some wail of passionate lament, whose sweet words called up in all hearts but hers who uttered them, feelings there is no name for.

Miss Lyneton wondered sometimes, how, thinking so little, Rose Beresford could express so much; how a soul whose capacities were of the feeblest, could give speech to passion which never stirred it; while those whose lives were lived with real, true earnest-

ness and passion which was more than seeming, could find no words to tell it, could only brood over it in dumb impatience.

Suddenly Rose stopped and wheeled round upon the music-stool, until she faced Miss Lyneton, who was sitting at the table by the lamp, busy with her usual evening work of etching designs from the old illuminated missals. It was work which progressed slowly to-night, though, for Gwendoline was too sad to be very industrious.

"Miss Lyneton, was not that gentleman we met yesterday, Mr. Deeping? I mean the gentleman who was coming towards the town just as we were turning into the Lyneton Abbots road. I just happened to look up as he was passing the carriage, and I thought I knew the step again. An awkward

step, too. Mr. Deeping certainly did not pay diligent heed to the instructions of the dancing-master in his younger days."

Gwendoline drew herself up slightly, and her lips were pressed together somewhat tighter than was their wont. But that might be because she had not sketched to her own satisfaction the head of the old monk who was bending over his rosary.

"Yes, we did meet Mr. Deeping as we were leaving Oresbridge. I did not think you knew him."

"Oh! I don't possess the honour of his acquaintance," replied Rose, just shaking her head saucily enough to make all the dark curls quiver into brilliance as they caught the lamplight on their glossy rings. "I was never considered to be a person of very lofty aspirations, or much given to reaching

beyond my own station, but still I should not exactly care to choose my friends from among the clerks in the Bellona iron-works, which very distinguished position I understand Mr. Deeping has the honour to sustain at the present time. But, you know, we had our rooms for the county ball this week at a Mrs. Mallinson's, in the Grosmont Road, whose husband keeps an Italian warehouse, as she calls it, but a meal and bacon shop, as I should call it, which we never found out until the fly drove up to the place, to our great disgust. Because, who could ever think that No. 19, Grosmont Road, which might be a residence fit for a duchess, would turn out a repository for meal and bacon? Of course we stayed, because it was too late to make a change; and really we were very comfortable—so

much so, that I should not object to go there another time. And it seems this young Mr. Deeping lodges there; so, you see, we could not help hearing a little about him, more especially as Mrs. Mallinson has a remarkable gift in conversation, and such a taste in cultivating it, too!"

Still that same compressed mouth, still that haughty raising of the head, as Miss Lyneton worked on at the old monk and his rosary. Rose thought it was Miss Lyneton's way to be very quiet. Perhaps she was feeling rather gloomy to-night, on account of Jeanie's departure; and so the young lady rattled on more vivaciously than ever, for it was a peculiarity of Rose Beresford's constitution that when other people were silent or moody, she became more animated.

“Yes. Mrs. Mallinson really is a remarkable woman. I only wish you could have had the honour of her acquaintance, Miss Lyneton;—a regular peripatetic philosopher, for she does her talking as she walks round and dusts the things with her pocket-handkerchief. And such a peculiar habit of sniffing, or snuffing—I don’t just know what is the proper word to use. It is clearly impossible to forget that sniff when you have once heard it, or witnessed the effects which it produces. Such a volume of sound, accompanied by the most original contortions and grimaces, put in by way of a finish, when she has come to the end of one of her long periods.”

And Rose imitated Mrs. Mallinson’s distinctive peculiarity with such laughable accuracy, that even Mr. Lyneton himself was

compelled to relax into a smile, and Gwendoline found it difficult, gloomy as were her thoughts, to keep a grave face. Certainly, when all other means of getting a livelihood failed, Miss Beresford might realize a competency by the exercise of that imitative faculty of hers, it was so truly marvellous.

“But a good-hearted woman, too, in her way, if only she was not so fond of talking. You never know when she means to give over if once she begins. She seems to know everything about everybody, and as she is most liberal in distributing her knowledge, you can imagine to what a length she is led out sometimes. Quite a manual of useful information, I should say, for anyone who wished to write a history of the manners and customs of Oresbridge; for nobody does anything there, I should imagine, with-

out letting her know about it. And she has a most motherly interest in Mr. Deeping, or rather, I should say, a mother-in-lawly interest, as my own power of observation enabled me to detect."

Under any other circumstances Miss Lyneton would have disdained to betray the slightest interest in a mere string of remarks bearing upon the personal affairs of strangers; people, too, of a station so far beneath her own. Now, however, there was a certain proud satisfaction in hearing of Mr. Deeping's commonplace surroundings, since it served still further to justify the decided step which had been taken in removing Jeanie from any further association with him. And there was the real Lyneton hauteur in her voice as she replied,

"And so I suppose this Mrs. Mallinson

treated you to an epitome of Mr. Deeping's family matters and arrangements, since she seems so well qualified to give information of that nature?"

"Exactly, that was the very thing she did. I do believe she told me everything about him, past, present, and to come. But she was drawn out, you know, to enter into particulars, because the young man was considerate enough to give up his sitting-room for our accommodation, and join Mrs. Mallinson and her daughter in the back parlour, a truly elegant apartment, where the leisure-time of the family appears to be spent. Though I don't imagine, after all, that the change involved any very great self-denial on Mr. Deeping's part; for amongst other little interesting items of information, Mrs. Mallinson gave us to understand that he cherished

a preference for her daughter, the fair-faced Matilda, sole heiress of the meal and bacon repository. And for her part she would not take it at all amiss if the young people *did* make matters up between them, for iron was a wonderful good thing to settle upon; there was nothing like iron for getting a young man on in the world. It came a long way before the ministry, which she might make free to tell us Sarah Matilda had once some thoughts of taking an interest in."

And Rose, who dearly loved a little fun at the expense of other people's peculiarities, put on Mrs. Mallinson's brisk nasal twang, and tossed her glossy curls after the manner of the scarlet fuschias in Mrs. Mallinson's best cap, and finished off with that good lady's resonant sniff of approbation, lateral twists and upheavals included—a most mirth-provoking

exhibition. But indeed it was a long time since she had met with such an original as Mrs. Mallinson, such an admirable subject for imitation and playful, harmless raillery.

“So you see, poor young man,” she continued; “we did not put him to any very serious discomfort when we turned him out of his sitting-room for a few hours. Nay, I believe, if the truth could be known, he sincerely thanked us in his heart of hearts for throwing him more completely into the fascinating companionship of the fair Sarah Matilda. Because when I happened to see him a second time, and was so impressed with his personal appearance, at least the reverse aspect of it, as to recognise him yesterday, he was standing behind his lady-love at the piano in the back parlour, a forty guinea piano, Miss Lyneton, as Mrs. Mallinson informed us, bought as soon

as ever Sarah Matilda left school, that her practice mightn't run off; because, you see, practice is a thing that runs off so soon; there's nothing that runs off so soon as practice, particularly the high notes, which she takes beautiful, does Sarah Matilda, if only she wasn't so nervous. And she was looking up into Mr. Deeping's face so sweetly—oh! so very sweetly. Really I could never hope by any poor words of mine to make you understand how very sweetly she was looking up into his face. It was quite overpowering! I don't wonder that the poor young man surrendered at discretion before the magic of a glance like that. You know, the door happened to be open as we went upstairs to dress, and so I saw the whole of the interesting performance. People ought not to have their back-parlour doors open

when they stand in such very endearing relations to each other. It is too tantalizing, it is indeed !”

And then the indefatigable little mimic twisted her pretty head on one side, and looking up to an imaginary Mr. Deeping, imitated Sarah Matilda's boarding-school smile, and the polished provincial accents in which, when Hugh, thoroughly wearied out, had got to the end of some tedious musical performance, she would remark,

“Oh ! pray don't give over yet, Mr. Deeping. That is so sweetly pretty, and I do so enjoy a bass voice. I'm sure I've said over and over again if there's one thing I like better than another, it is a good bass voice. Now, haven't I, ma ?”

CHAPTER XIV.

BUT this time Rose Beresford's mimicry did not produce a smile. Mr. Lyneton and his sister exchanged glances which betrayed anything but an amused appreciation of their young guest's imitative faculties, nor was she encouraged that evening to any further development of them.

Presently Mr. Lyneton went away into the library, where, had Rose listened, she might have heard him walking up and down for the next half hour. A most unusual thing for him to do there, for his walking exercise was generally confined to that path by the old mouldering stone wall, where the mosses

were blooming now so greenly, and the lichens staining it with many a patch of brown and gold. When he went into the library, it was almost always for a quiet spell of reading in that great easy-chair by the fire, Rollo outstretched at his feet.

Gwendoline heard him though, and she knew what was vexing him into that restless pacing to and fro. Gwendoline still sat by the table, putting stroke after stroke to the monk's head, which was nearly finished now—a quaint, grave-looking old fellow, with a face somewhat like Abbot Siward's, a face which might be trusted for betraying no secrets, which would never tell by smile or frown anything that had better be kept quiet. Gwendoline's lips were tightly pressed together still, and the level brows were bent over the quiet grey eyes, which had a cold gleam in

them now, like that which had puzzled Hugh Deeping so much the day before. For all the rest she was as calm as ever. Rose Beresford might have been ridiculing someone at the antipodes, for any interested notice which was taken of her playful nonsense.

Miss Lyneton had great self-control. It belonged to the family. Her mother's pride and her father's firmness blended in her own strong nature. There was scarcely any passion or emotion which she could not, if she chose, shut down and keep tightly hidden away beneath an exterior of perfect quietness and courtesy. But very bitter thoughts were brooding in her heart all the time, thoughts which only an honourable and truth-loving nature can know, when both truth and honour have been shamelessly set at naught. Much bitterer thoughts than those

which had stirred her, when on the ball night she stood by the fire in that oriel room, drawing on her white gloves, waiting for the carriage to come round and take them to the Oresbridge Assembly Rooms.

Her scorn had been roused then, when she knew that Hugh Deeping had been trying to win Jeanie's affection, that he had so far forgotten the immeasurable distance which separated them, as to dream of joining his interests with theirs. But it was only scorn, touched perhaps with surprise and pity that the young man should so grievously overstep his position, and presume upon the kindness which had been shown him. Now, her indignation was stirred. It was ignorance or presumption no longer against which she had to defend her niece, but falseness and duplicity. He had been amusing himself with

Jeanie whilst he was bound to another. That pleasant face and frank, outspoken manner of his covered a false heart. She could almost have despised herself for having been so far deceived by them as to have reached out a friendly hand and lifted him for a little season from his low belongings to companionship with people whose finer tastes and more cultivated minds he seemed able to appreciate. Ah! these low-born people, there was no trusting them, these people whose ancestry had been swept together from the lanes and byways of plebeianism, who had no old memories to be faithful to, no honourable name to keep sacred from stain of unworthy deed, and hand it down, a pure and spotless heritage, to those who should bear it after them.

Falseness and duplicity, the very sins which

the old Lynetons had always hated so, which none had ever dared, or ever should dare to charge upon them. There was no forgiving of deceit, no bringing back again, even to distant toleration, of anyone whose heart bore that black stain. Perhaps she might in time have pardoned the too lofty aspirations of an obscure counting-house clerk, who, dazzled by a little attention from those above him in rank, and fascinated, maybe, by Jeanie's kindly manner, which sometimes went almost too far for the Lyneton reserve, had been drawn into an indiscreet freedom, and tempted to seek so much more than was his due; but meanness and falsehood she could never forgive, nor should anyone who dealt in them ever have welcome to the old house at Lyneton Abbots again.

So Gwendoline thought to herself as she

sat there by the lamp, working on at the monk's head until it was quite finished; that reverent, bended head which scarce seemed to have a thought save for the telling of its beads. She listened patiently enough to Rose's playful badinage, answering it now and then, when answer seemed needful, in a voice which, if not quite so light, told as little of deep or painful feeling. Only by the cold gleam in her eyes, and the sometimes harsher bend of the level brows, could anyone guess at the brooding thoughts within.

By-and-by she made an excuse for leaving Miss Beresford, and went to her own room, the dormer-windowed room, with its black oak wainscotting and curiously-carved old-fashioned furniture; the room where her mother died, the room where she so often came to read Maurice Demeron's letters.

They were all there now, letters reaching over five long years of separation and suspense, carefully wrapped together in one of the partitions of that inlaid writing-table which had belonged to the first Mrs. Lyneton. Sometimes, when Jeanie and her brother were out, Gwendoline would come up into this room and read them all over from the beginning. Bright, pleasant, intelligent letters they were, such as might be read out aloud to anyone, well expressed, well put together; just the picture of his every-day life, with here and there a clever hit at some fashionable foible, or a chance remark, which showed a keen, quick appreciation of character; all these put aside towards the close for questions about the old home at Lyneton Abbots, and the friends he still remembered there. Nothing romantic or sentimental in them, nothing

either deeply reflective or philosophical, just friendly, every-day letters. But Gwendoline knew where, in many a seeming idle sentence, to find the sweet under-meaning which brought her sometimes so much gladness. Her own true heart held the magic tincture which, dropped upon those common words, turned them into fine gold.

There would not be many more of those letters now. Only five months and Maurice Demeron would be home again. She had been very faithful. Not once in all those years had she been to him untrue, even in thought or wish. Not in vain had he trusted one of the proud Lynetons, of Lyneton Abbots, knowing that they were never false to any who believed in them. The constancy of the olden knights and ladies, who in generations past had lived so purely, and loved

so truly, was not outlived in their descendants. They, too, could love as truly, and wait as patiently. Yes, and if needs be, die as fearlessly, too; for the Lynetons were ever faithful, even unto death. Coming home again, Maurice Demeron would find all that he had left five years ago; love not dimmed from its first bright steadfastness, trust not worn out for all these years of cruel waiting and suspense. And if those cheeks had lost a little of their young roundness, and if those still grey eyes had a sadder look, and if the pale brown hair was folded over a brow which bore here and there the faintest touch of care, it was thought of him which had done it all. Surely he should love her not the less for any of these things, but only more, for the story of patient waiting which they told.

But it was not to read these letters, nor to quicken any sweet memories which they might hold, that Gwendoline Lyneton came up into her own room to-night. Though they lay so near that she need but stretch out her hand to unlock the old-fashioned writing-table, and unloose them from their silken band, they lay there untouched. No thought of them served to clear away the cloud from Miss Lyneton's brow, or to smooth out the lines of quiet scorn, which, now that none was near to note them, wrote themselves more plainly upon her face.

That playful mimicry of Rose Beresford's had done its bitter work. Her idle words, spoken without thought or purpose, just out of the emptiness of a shallow heart, would put sadness enough by-and-by into at least one life ; put much more than sadness into it,

something whose traces would not so easily pass away. Nay, perhaps they would make that life such as she herself, so daintily reared, so carefully shielded from outward taint of vice or impropriety, should behold far-off with great horror, thanking God that she was not so deeply stained, that she at least had never done anything to make her friends ashamed of her, or to stir in their loving hearts one thought of pain.

Rose Beresford had often amused herself in that way before. Most likely she would often do so again. For she dearly loved, as she said, to make fun of people, to take off their little oddities, and hold them up to ridicule with a delicate playfulness which no one could ever be harsh enough to rebuke, it was so very bright and graceful. Indeed, Rose would not have been half so popular amongst her

friends, she would not have won so much flattery, or been so eagerly sought after, but for that amusing gift of hers, that power of reproducing, with such humorous facility, the laughable side of life, seizing the merest little accidental peculiarity, and imitating it with all the added charm of exaggeration.

It was quite a gift, everyone said; though whilst they watched her display it, an unspoken fear lurked behind all their laughter, lest some day that delicate satire might be turned upon themselves, and they in their turn provoke a smile, or have some little pet oddity of theirs used to finish off one of Rose's playful sallies.

No need to follow Miss Lyneton through all the thoughts which Rose's idle words had roused. Rose knew well enough they were but idle words. She had only spoken them

to move a passing smile, to stir her friend out of what she thought was a gloomy mood, consequent upon Jeanie's departure. It was just her way of amusing herself, nothing more than that; and she would have laughed a merry, musical laugh, had anyone ventured to tell her that mischief could lurk in words so lightly spoken, or that the gleam of an unsheathed sword might have been less dangerous than that playful sporting with untruth, which she loved so well.

After a little while, though quite long enough for Miss Beresford to have almost forgotten that brief episode of harmless nonsense, Gwendoline came downstairs again to the oriel room, and went through her duties as hostess as calmly and courteously as though nothing had ever occurred to ruffle her usual composure.

With the Lyneton people actions ever followed closely upon purposes. There was never much hesitation or delay over anything they had to do, when once the need for doing it was clearly seen. That same evening Mr. Lyneton and his sister had a short consultation in the library, whilst Rose Beresford amused herself with some pretty piece of fancy-work, and wrote a very charming letter to one of her friends in Ireland, detailing at length the account of the Oresbridge county ball, with the various little flirtations which she had noticed during the evening; also particularising the most elegant costumes, amongst which Miss Lyneton's, a rose-coloured crape, with magnificent point lace on the sleeves and bosom, had struck her as being remarkably striking. And Miss Jeanie Lyneton, an innocent little country maiden, in

white muslin and frosted ivy-leaves, had looked very pretty too, but not striking at all; no style about her, only a sort of May-dew and rosebud freshness, which would very soon wear off. And then Rose described the gentlemen with such playful raillery, and so many saucy hits at their divers peculiarities and identities, that the lady to whom the letter was addressed said, when she received it, that such a correspondent as Rose Beresford was worth half a score physicians' prescriptions for nervousness and lowness of spirits.

Next morning, the morning of the day on which Hugh Deeping came to the Manor-house to assist in making up the accounts, and preparing a statement of expenses, a note was sent to his address in Grosmont Road, enclosing the amount of his salary up to the end of the year. Also stating that, in

consequence of recent unpleasant circumstances, Mr. Deeping's services would no longer be required at Lyneton Abbots.

CHAPTER XV.

HUGH had been working with extra diligence that day at the Bellona iron-works. Indeed, ever since his meeting with Miss Lynton and her sister three days ago, he had been "going at it," as his fellow-clerks said, with almost frantic energy. He felt he must have some safety-valve for the anxiety which was gnawing at him all the more cruelly because he could not call himself to account for any misdemeanour grave enough to have merited such punishment. One thing, however, was certain, he had not grieved Jeanie. His offence, whatever it might be, had not

turned her heart against him. Her look when they met that afternoon, just at the bend of the Lyneton Abbots road, if lacking the bright cheerfulness which he generally used to find in it, spoke of neither rebuke nor coldness.

And whilst Hugh could believe in Jeanie's steadfastness—whilst he could persuade himself that she was true to him, he did not care though all the world besides were up in arms against him. He had still one sure resting-place, whatever came to pass. There was still one who would believe in him for what he was, not for what slander or misrepresentation made him seem to be. Hugh felt as if he could bear anything, and go through any amount of disagreeableness, and have any sort of odium cast upon him, and come out of it all at last brave and bright as ever, if only Jeanie Lyneton kept true

to him, if only she would trust him that he was a noble and honourable man.

If Jeanie played him false, why, then he would give up at once. It would be no use believing in anybody after that. He would go away altogether, set off to New Zealand, Australia, Greenland, anywhere where nobody knew him—where he could do as he liked, and be as wild as he chose, and lead a reckless, care-for-nobody life, and forget that he had ever loved and trusted, and been deceived, as thousands of his fellow-men, just as foolish as himself, had loved and trusted, and then found themselves deceived. Then it would certainly be no use trying any more. All would indeed be over. He would shake hands with his hopes, and purposes, and good resolutions, say good-bye to them, and set his face re-

olutely towards a grand, heroic despair.

But until then there was no need for such extreme measures. He would not have very long to wait. Only until Saturday afternoon, the time for going to Lyneton Abbots, when perhaps he might see Jeanie alone, and hear from her if anything had gone wrong. At any rate, if it was anything serious, Mr. Lyneton would tell him, and, at least, give him the opportunity of explaining himself, if offence had been given. Perhaps, after all, his uncomfortableness might only be the result of fancy. Miss Lyneton might have been annoyed by circumstances entirely unconnected with himself. And as unlucky urchins who chance to be near an irritated master sometimes get blows which are not intended for them, so he might have received a cold, rebuking

glance, whose real mission had been in quite another direction. At any rate, so long as he had any duty to do, he would do it well, and wait patiently for the worst that could come after that.

It was in this spirit, full of hardihood and determination, ready to hold up his face against all the world, and claim his rights as a man and a gentleman, that Hugh Deeping came home from the Bellona iron-works on Saturday afternoon, and was confronted by Mrs. Mallinson, with the note from Lyneton Abbots.

Mrs. Mallinson had not been quite so gracious to her lodger since the night of the county ball, when, instead of cheerfully availing himself of a whole long evening of uninterrupted intercourse with Sarah Matilda, he had made some excuse about a headache, or something

of that sort, perhaps it might be hoarseness, Mrs. Mallinson could not exactly remember, and after just joining in with Sarah Matilda in one or two songs, had sallied out, neither of them knew where, and never made his appearance again until nearly bedtime. It was ungrateful. It was more than ungrateful, it was ungentlemanly. It was more than ungentlemanly, it was rude, positively rude, and Mrs. Mallinson could not have thought it of him, that he should so far have forgotten all the attention that had been paid him, and all the kindness that had been heaped upon him ever since he took the apartments, kindness which could not have been more unremitting even had the young man been her own son. She must say that she had never been quite able to get over it, and behave to him the same

as before. People *had* feelings, and they had a right to have them considered. Mrs. Mallinson had had her misgivings about him for some time, though his handsome behaviour about giving up the sitting-room for the use of Mrs. and Miss Beresford, had rather brought her round again; but she must say ever since that night of the county ball it had been all she could do to be civil, and she really did not think she should ever ask him downstairs into the back parlour any more. Which would no doubt be a loss to him by-and-by, though he was so very much taken up just now with the great folks at Lyneton Abbots. For everyone knew that sort of thing could not last. Mr. Lyneton only wanted to get a little more work out of him, and when the estate had got itself turned round, and could hold together a little longer, they would

quietly dismiss him, and he would be glad enough of a little comfortable friendly society in the back parlour.

But no, she should not welcome him into the back parlour then. He might enjoy himself as well as he could in the sitting-room upstairs, all alone by himself, with his cup of tea and his baker's lump, as he had such a very great fancy for retirement. It was well for people to learn wisdom by experience sometimes, and if he did not care just now for invitations in to supper, there were other people who did, as he might have found out the night before, if he had come downstairs and seen Mr. Reynolds so very attentive to Sarah Matilda, and turning over her music and paying her every respect, which was a great deal more than he had ever done. And there were other businesses too, quite as satis-

factory as the iron business, and quite as good for getting a young man on in the world; and for her part she could not see that a counting-house clerk was any such great thing after all, even if there *was* an advance of salary every quarter, which she very much doubted, or Mr. Deeping might be more liberal in his expenditure, and order a little something out of the shop now and then by way of relish, instead of that baker's lump day after day and week after week, even less than a mechanic at three shillings a day would be content with. Mrs. Mallinson did not understand such meanness, if there *was* an advance every quarter.

So it was with no very gracious air that she gave Hugh the note which had been left by the trusty old servant-man from Lyneton Abbots.

Hugh wisely delayed opening it until his landlady had left the room. It was a very stately, frigid note, grim and pitiless as the old griffins who glared such stony defiance from the gateway at Lyneton Abbots. A cheque for so many pounds, certainly many more than he had earned, and many more than he intended to keep, though that extra half year's salary would have procured many a little comfort for his mother and sister, and a fine succession of delicacies out of the shop, which might almost have brought Mrs. Mallinson round again, had Hugh's conduct on the night of the county ball not alienated him for ever from her regards. No explanation, either, of that cold rebuking look. Only a haughty reference to recent unpleasant circumstances, and a formal intimation that his services would cease to be required

as heretofore in the management of Mr. Lyneton's accounts.

Hugh read the letter again and again, as though any amount of reading could make its meaning more palatable, or twist into a pleasanter shape its harsh, unwelcome message. And then he looked at the device upon the seal, pondered that over for a quarter of an hour. Hand and cross; faith and action. The Lynetons were true to the last part of their motto, certainly. No lack of promptitude in action. Hugh thought they might also have been as ready to trust. They might at any rate have believed in him as an honest man until they had proved him otherwise.

So then that terrible look had not missed its mark when it fell upon him. That vague, undefined feeling of uncomfortableness

which had haunted him ever since he encountered Miss Lyneton and Jeanie in the Lyneton Abbots road, had been a true herald of coming disaster. All was over now. No more pleasant evenings in the old Manor-house, no more fireside readings with Jeanie's sweet bright face turned towards his, yet turned away again with such quick shyness, when looks of his fell too earnestly upon it. No more talking to each other through the words of those quaint old poets, whose warm thoughts, blossomed into rhyme, had spoken theirs too. No more grave pleasant courtesy from Miss Lyneton, courtesy given so frankly, yet with ever a lofty kindness which seemed to hold him far off. No more walks with Mr. Lyneton, quiet afternoon walks, in which so many other things were discussed than the mere money matters of the estate; when they

talked of men and books and thoughts, and of the great world of life around them, and Hugh felt his mind quickened and his powers sharpened by friction, and his own thoughts kindled into clearness and activity by being discussed with one who could both appreciate and question them. All this over, and why?

Yes, why? That was what vexed Hugh even more than the cold, curt note. He was wronged and suspected when he had looked for quite other treatment. He had worked well for Mr. Lyneton. He had given him the best of his talents. He had reduced the tangled confusion of those old balance-sheets and statements to something like order. A few months more and the work would have been done, the estate righted again and put upon a sure footing; and all this chiefly through energy and perseverance of his. Hav-

ing proved him so far, did Mr. Lyneton now begin to distrust him? Did he think that he had served him with the mere slippery service of a hireling, who only laboured for pay, and not for loving interest?

Or—and Hugh felt his cheeks grow angry—red at the thought—did Mr. Lyneton suppose that he had cheated him in any of the work that he had done? Did they think that these hands of his had been reached out to grasp more than their due? Did Mr. Lyneton think that the man who had sat by his fireside and been treated by him as a friend, could meanly have taken advantage of his confidence, and used that very trust to betray him? Was this what Mr. Lyneton meant by “recent unpleasant circumstances?” Was this, then, all that he had toiled for, to be dismissed as a cheat, turned away from his

work without even an accusation, without the opportunity of defending himself or throwing back so proudly as he could have thrown back, any slur which they might seek to cast upon his honour? Was this the way of the old Lyneton people? Was this the kindness that high descent of theirs had taught them? Hugh Deeping thought those brave old knights who slept in St. Hilda's church would not so have treated any man who had toiled for them as he had toiled for Mr. Lyneton.

And Jeanie. Would she believe it? Would she turn against him, too? Jeanie, who he felt belonged to him, spite of all these puny barriers of cast and degree,—plate-glass of convention, cold and hard, but which he felt with one strong blow he could shiver, and reach out his hand to take her

for his own. Would they ever make her think that he whom she had trusted with her love, could not be trusted with her father's gold? Tried and found wanting in so small a thing as that, would she have faith in him for anything higher?

That thought settled Hugh. He could bear anything else, but he could not bear that Jeanie should doubt him.

Stay, that was not it—he never thought in his very heart that she would doubt him, he thought he had that trust in her faithfulness which would hold him to her, however far they had been parted; and he felt she had that trust in him which would not let her doubt. Only it angered him that she should even be tempted to doubt; that even one passing suspicion should ever have leave to ruffle the perfect trust of which he

always resolved to be worthy. They might think what they would of him. They might bring against him what slander they chose. They might thrust him out from his place amongst them, a place which themselves had given him, with no seeking of his. All this he was willing to bear. It might wound him sorely; it would not be a wound unto death. But they should never make her doubt him. He would at least clear himself to her, and keeping her love and trust still, all the rest was indeed of little worth.

So Hugh Deeping set off there and then, with all these angry thoughts stirring and rankling in his heart, to Lyneton Abbots, there to demand what every true man has a right to demand, the reason why his character had been tarnished, and his honour stained.

CHAPTER XVI.

HUGH DEEPING felt very heroic as he went along that quiet country road, between the budding hedgerows, at whose roots bloomed many a purple patch of violet, and star-like cluster of pale primrose; where, too, had he looked, he might have found bright-eyed daises opening their rosy fringed lids, under green beds of chickweed, or side by side with the brave yellow buttercups, which never feared March frost, or shrank from its biting winds.

But Hugh never looked for them. He was thinking all the way how he should confront

old Mr. Lyneton with the fearless grandeur of innocence; how he would make him feel, shut in as he was by that stately pride of his, that he, too, Hugh Deeping, was a man, and a gentleman, in virtue of the gentle soul, as true a patent of nobility as a name crusted with the mould of antiquity, and sculptured on graves over which the damps of half a thousand years had fallen. What worth was there in all the world save the worth of clean hands and an honest heart? Taking these, you took from a man what no Norman blood and no lofty name could give him, the right to be called one of God Almighty's gentlemen. And these Mr. Lyneton had tried to take from him, and these he would never give up, these he would fight for to the last. They belonged to him, the poor counting-house clerk, with a right as

clear and unquestionable as that by which the proudest baron in England held his ancestral acres. And sooner should that proudest baron wander forth from his home, beggared and defenceless, with no longer a foot of ground to call his own, or one of all those countless menials of his to give him daily bread, than he, Hugh Deeping, should yield up one iota of his honour, or one fraction of that brave independence which, as yet, he had never, by dishonest word or deed, lost the right to wear.

Thinking such thoughts as these, he arrived, in no very calm or collected frame of mind, at Lyneton Abbots. The grey-headed serving-man received him courteously enough, and ushered him into the library, where his Saturday afternoon business was usually transacted.

Mr. Lyneton was out, the old man said, in reply to Hugh's first inquiry.

Then could he see Miss Lyneton?

The man disappeared, and presently brought back a message that his mistress was engaged, and could not speak with Mr. Deeping.

Might he see Miss Lyneton's niece, then?

To which the old man replied that Miss Jeanie was not at home. She had gone to London the day before with Miss Hildegarde Lyneton, and was not expected to return for some weeks. And having given that information, he held the library door open, as though to intimate to the visitor that he might depart at his earliest convenience.

Which Hugh made haste to do. As he went out under the ponderous old porch, in

which, not a week ago, he had stood with Jeanie's hand in his, the iron-barred door clanging behind him seemed to bid him away, and shut upon him for ever the welcome he had once had to the stately old home of Lyneton Abbots. His day was over there. He need go no more now. Those iron bars and bolts were not more strong than the will of the strong man who had closed them against him.

More angry than ever, Hugh retraced his steps to Oresbridge, back again to the provision-dealer's shop, and the cheap-fine sitting-room, with its perfume of coffee and smoked hams. He felt completely mortified and humiliated. He had set off to Lyneton Abbots full of such a noble scorn, ready to defend himself with bitter, burning eloquence against false accusation and cruel injustice ;

ready to throw down the gauntlet before Mr. Lyneton, daring that stately old man to mar by even thought or suspicion of blame aught that he had done. And after having poured out all this torrent of indignation, and crushed his aristocratic defamer by the sublime force of innocence, he should return and face all the world with a braver front than ever, feeling himself more of a man because of the very bitterness of the strife which he had been compelled to wage.

But instead of anything of this kind, instead of quitting the presence of his injurers with the proud consciousness of triumphant innocence, he found himself simply flattened down beneath an extinguisher of cold contempt, his explanations not listened to, himself not even allowed the opportunity of presenting them, to say nothing of fol-

lowing them up by any burning words of scorn and indignation. He wished he had been firm; he wished he had insisted upon an interview with Mr. or Miss Lyneton, and poured out upon them, whilst it was yet newly kindled, all the fierce torrent of his anger. He could have made them shrink and cower, he knew he could, for this their injustice. He could have convinced them that truth, and honour, and bravery, ay, and pride too, might find their home quite elsewhere than in natures stiffened with ancestral pomp, and warped by the worn-out prejudices of cast and degree. But it was too late now. He had let the opportunity go by.

He felt so angry as he hurried home along that quiet country road, through the frosty March air. He felt as if he wanted to fight

somebody. It would have been such a relief to him to have knocked somebody down, regardless of five shillings and costs next morning. Or if there had been a street row, that he could have joined in, just to work off a little of that passionate discontent. He was quite equal to anything of that kind. He could have entered into it with such hearty good will, and done such vigorous execution with those strong arms of his. But there was no commotion of that sort going on when he reached Grosmont Road. The street was very quiet, only the usual clusters of dirty little boys hanging round the pastrycook's window, and a few milk-girls clinking their pails, and now and then an organ-man, grinding away at some worn-out old ditty; nothing whatever to get up an excitement about, or to draw away any of the super-

fluous energy which seemed goading him on to action of some kind.

At last he came to the provision-dealer's shop, where, this being Saturday, the busiest evening of the week, Mr. Mallinson was bustling about with unusual alacrity, weighing out pounds of sugar, dissecting hams, digging his taster into wedges of cheese, and then handing it across the counter to some thrifty manager who was laying in her weekly supply of Cheshire or Gloucestershire; interspersing all these various operations with a brisk, running fire of criticisms upon the weather, and the price of bacon, and the possibility of sugars coming down before the summer set in.

Hugh hurried across the shop, quite unmindful of Mr. Mallinson's passing remark—

“Fine night, sir; glasses holding up nicely;

hope you left all well at Lyneton Abbots."

And upstairs, three steps at a time, to his sitting-room, where he began to tramp up and down with such heavy-footed vehemence, that Mrs. Mallinson sent Betsy to know if anything was the matter. Hugh was very much tempted to return a message in accordance with the state of his feelings, and request Mrs. Mallinson to mind her own business, without interfering with his; but he had prudence enough to control himself for once, and returned answer that nothing was the matter. Whereupon Mrs. Mallinson sent Betsy up again with her compliments, and would Mr. Deeping be so kind as to make a less noise, for Miss Sarah Matilda had some friends in to tea, and it disturbed their conversation.

Betsy did not wait for a reply, which

might have been given in more forcible and less courteous terms than the previous one. But she gathered up Mr. Deeping's boots, which he had thrown into separate corners of the room, and went downstairs with them, muttering to herself as she did so, for she had never got quite reconciled to the cleaning of an extra pair of Wellingtons every morning—

“He's a-going to look out for something else, mind if he isn't. I've seen this good bit past, as the missis don't lay herself out to please him same as she used to when first he comed.”

Finding himself debarred from even the slight relief of walking up and down the room, Hugh had recourse to the letter again, and for the fiftieth time read it over with no better success than before. Ponder it as

he would, this was all the information he could get out of it, cold and formal enough too :

“Mr. Lyneton encloses a cheque for the amount of Mr. Deeping's yearly salary, and begs to inform him that in consequence of recent unpleasant circumstances, his services will no longer be required at Lyneton Abbots.”

This from Jeanie's father!—this from the man whom he would have served to the very limit of his strength, not for reward, but only for the love he bore to her. It was certainly very hard. It was almost enough to make him give up his new-found faith in human goodness and truth.

But Hugh was determined to know the reason of this sudden overclouding of a sky which only one little week ago had looked so bright. Hours seemed days whilst they

brought with them this slow, galling suspense. He would write to Mr. Lyneton this very night, and demand from him an explanation of this sudden withdrawal of his confidence from one who had always held that confidence sacred. He would stand upon his rights as a gentleman, and claim a detail of these "unpleasant circumstances," whatever they might be, which had so rudely and cruelly broken the pleasant bond of social intercourse. He would at least know why he had been wronged, for that was a knowledge which no one had the power to withhold from him.

So Hugh sat down at once to put his resolve into practice. He spoiled about five-and-twenty sheets of good cream-laid note-paper before he produced an epistle which common-sense told him would be at all suitable to the

occasion. His first onslaught was violent and declamatory, just a tirade of reproach and self-justification. Forgetful alike of dignity, position, respect due to age, or indeed anything but his own angry pride, he poured out the full tide of his feelings in half a dozen crowded pages, which, had Mr. Lynton read them, would certainly not have heightened his opinion of Mr. Deeping's discretion and self-control. But remembering that he was writing to Jeanie's father, Hugh tore that up and set to work upon another. This second attempt deepened unconsciously into pleading and entreaty, both of which, when he came to read it calmly over, were spurned as unworthy of a man who had done no wrong. So that followed the first to the flames. So did a third, which degenerated, before it was half done, into cra-

ven submission; and a fourth, which rose into lofty scorn, and even defiance. And these were followed by others, all of them halting midway, like those childish rhymes of Rose Beresford's, until evening set in, and unless Hugh wished to spend the coming Sabbath in his present unbearable state of suspense, he must decide upon something and get it despatched forthwith.

He made one more desperate effort, and this time completed a short, business-like note, in which, with as much dignity as he could command, he requested an explanation of the unpleasant circumstances to which Mr. Lyne-ton alluded; and also returned the cheque, it being in advance of the sum to which his period of service entitled him.

Hugh was satisfied with that note. It was just such as any gentleman might have

written to any other gentleman—brief, concise, courteous. It could not fail, he thought, to produce an explanation, perhaps even a conciliation. For, though wounded and very angry, he could not bring himself to think yet with anything but heavy sadness of the closing up of a friendship which had once been so pleasant. He could not quite cast away the last little lingering rays of hope, and put those choice Saturday evenings amongst the joys of the past—joys which would never, never come to him any more.

He folded up his letter, addressed it in a fine, flowing, fearless hand, and gave the apprentice boy a shilling to run with it to Lyneton Abbots after the shop was closed, and bring him an answer back. He was to be sure and have an answer; and if they told him that Mr. Lyneton was engaged,

and could not write just then, he was to say that he could wait; but he must take an answer back with him either from Mr. or Miss Lyneton.

Then Hugh sat down by his solitary fire-side with a large volume of Shakespeare open upon his knee, in order that if Mrs. Mallinson came into the room unawares, as she used sometimes, to see whether the gas was turned on too high, or the fire upheaped more than was consistent with the stipulated agreement for coals, she might be beguiled into the notion that he was enjoying his quiet evening as much as usual. And there he waited, with such patience as he could muster, for that note from Lyneton Abbots, which should either bring back the former sunshine, or shut it away from him for ever.

CHAPTER XVII.

NOT much more than an hour had elapsed before Mr. Mallinson's apprentice boy made his appearance with the eagerly-expected note. Its contents, whatever they might be, could not have cost Mr. Lyneton quite so much time and thought as poor Hugh spent over his communication. The cheque was re-enclosed, with a request that Mr. Lyneton might not again be annoyed by its return. The recent unpleasant circumstances of which Mr. Deeping sought an explanation, were not in any way connected with the management of the accounts which had been entrusted to him ;

and if Mr. Deeping's own sense of honour, and his consciousness of the position which he held with respect to the family at Lyneton Abbots, were not sufficient to indicate the impropriety of the line of conduct which he had pursued, Mr. Lyneton deemed it unnecessary to enter upon further explanations. The note closed with a polite intimation that Mr. Deeping might now consider the correspondence between him and Mr. Lyneton as at an end.

Poor Hugh! He had but sunk deeper in the mire through this vain effort to extricate himself from it. He had but escaped the imputation of dishonourableness or incompetency in business matters, to incur the worse imputation of seeking to force himself into a position of which he was unworthy. With such a cool, lofty courtesy, he was reminded of his "inferior position;" he who by mind and edu-

cation, if not by the mere accident of birth, stood proudly level with his supercilious master. Nay, much more than level with him, for Hugh had won for himself, by hard study, and the sheer force of his own intelligence, a far higher standing-place as regarded literary attainments, than all Mr. Lyneton's years of travel, and association with cultivated minds, had been able to give him. Was he, Hugh Deeping, with his fine tastes, his varied acquirements, the large and liberal ideas which a good education had given him, to be taunted with his "inferior position" by a man who, in none of these things, stood superior to him? Was there, then, nothing in the world that could make a man worthy save a name that had been worn by knights and courtiers five centuries ago? Was it nothing to have clean hands and an honest heart, and to be able

to look the whole world in the face, daring it to accuse him of aught unmanly? Was it his fault that circumstances had cast him down from a position as honourable as even Mr. Lyneton's, and forced him to toil in a counting-house for his daily bread? Ought not that very misfortune, bravely conquered by him, to have strengthened his claim on a true man's sympathies, instead of shutting him out from them? Ought it not to have opened wide for him the gate of friendship; not barred that gate against him?"

And then he was coolly reminded—as if indeed he had ever forgotten it—of his sense of honour, the very thing on which he most of all prided himself. For when had anyone known him do a mean action? When had he taken advantage of the weak, or bowed himself in homage to the strong?

That name of his might not be graven on tombstones five centuries old, beneath emblazoned coats-of-arms, and splendid heraldic devices, such as the chancel end of St. Hilda's church could show; it had never been greatly known in courts or palaces, or made famous on bloody battle-fields; but if it lacked such distinction as that, it did not lack the finer distinction of honesty and truth. It was a name that none need blush to wear, albeit unallied as yet to very shining deeds. And if, instead of idly taking the worth which others had left behind, he was trying to make himself worthy, to live so that those who came after him might not be ashamed of him, was that less honourable than shining in the borrowed light of dead greatness, and using the splendid memories of the past to hide the pitiful smallness of the present? Sense

of honour! Hugh thought there were things more honourable than to condemn a man untried, and to take away his character without even giving him the chance of defending it.

Poor preparation this for Hugh's Sunday-morning devotions, if, indeed, there could be any devotion possible to a heart so angry and discontented. But there was one resource left. He could write to Jeanie. She at least would understand him. She had had faith in him all along. She had trusted him and discerned the real, true heart of him through all vexing hindrances of misfortune and circumstances. There was hope for him; he could bear anything, wait any length of time, work patiently on through whatever of hard toil and endeavour lay before him; nay, even endure to be misunderstood, and

undervalued by everyone else, if only she remembered him still, and had faith in him. He would write to her, and if she gave him up, why then all would be over.

He had heard Miss Lyneton speak of their Aunt Hildegarde, and he knew the part of London in which she lived, for sometimes when he was leaving Lyneton Abbots, they had given him letters to post for her at Oresbridge. So he wrote to Jeanie, and told her all his trouble; told her how he had been wronged, doubted, mistrusted; how, without the opportunity of explaining anything, or justifying himself from any imaginary wrong, he had been dismissed from the trust which he had always tried to fulfil so faithfully, which had never suffered from any neglect of his, and never should have suffered so long as he held it. But he told

her, too, how he could bear it if only she had faith in him, and would wait patiently until he could work his way up to the place which he felt belonged to him, a place which even she need not be ashamed to share with him.

That letter did not cost so much thought as the other, written an hour or two before. No need to stay for well-chosen words which should express, with suitable dignity and self-control, the feelings of a man who felt himself wronged, yet was too proud to plead against it. Hugh's heart dictated the letter to Jeanie, not his sense of honour or his wounded trust. And he felt so sure that when Jeanie read it, all would be right again. For he had such faith in her. He knew she would never think harshly of him, or believe any idle tales against him. And

whilst they had trust in each other, and whilst, however far separated, they could each rest in the quiet thought of love, held fast through all trial and waiting, there was hope. Nay, there was much more than hope. They *could* not lose each other.

Hugh wrote and posted his letter that same night. Sunday passed, Monday, and Tuesday. He had studied through whole college terms, and not felt them so long and dreary as those three days. He might have been too late for the post on Saturday night; he was not quite sure when the London letters went out from Oresbridge. And then he remembered with a great throb of relief that there was no Sunday delivery in town, a fact which he had quite forgotten when he sent his letter. Jeanie could not get it, then, until Monday morning, and she might not know the Lon-

don regulation about letters for the country. She might think that they could be posted late at night, just the same as she used to post them at Lyneton Abbots, in which case, of course, he should not get it until the afternoon delivery.

But it did not come by the afternoon delivery, nor by the next morning's delivery either, and Hugh must plod through another long weary day at the Bellona works before that terrible suspense was ended—suspense which seemed worse to him, far, far worse than all the six months of labour and toil which he had had since he came to Oresbridge. But he was quite sure it would be ended, and brightly ended, too. He had never any other thought than that.

The letter did indeed find its way safely enough to the grand, stately old house at the

west end of London, and was there taken possession of by Aunt Hildegarde, who always emptied the contents of the post-bag herself. And, seeing the Oresbridge post-mark upon it, missing, also, the Lyneton Abbots crest, which ought to have been on all Jeanie's Oresbridge letters, and deciphering through her gold-rimmed spectacles, instead of that time-honoured device of hand and cross, the quite common-place initials, H. D., she very prudently said nothing at all to her niece about the letter, but sent it unopened to her nephew, Mr. Lyneton of Lyneton Abbots. And Mr. Lyneton, knowing the handwriting well enough, for he had scores of duplicates of it in the bureau where he kept his estate accounts, put it into a blank cover, and re-addressed it to Mr. Hugh Deeping, care of Mr. Mallinson, provision-dealer, Grosmont Road,

not without a little surprise at the pertinacity of a young man who required so very much putting down before he could be made to understand the behaviour suitable to his position.

It was lying on Hugh's sitting-room table, side by side with the solitary cup and saucer and baker's "lump," when he came home from the Bellona iron-works on Wednesday evening.

Hugh tore it open, threw the envelope into the fire, as was his custom, and found his own letter—the letter into which he had poured so much love and trust, in which he had told out all his heart, its hope, fear, pain, longing, sent back to him unopened.

A sweet gift, truly, after so long a waiting—a pleasant surprise to close that day of toil and weariness, which had only been en-

dured at all because he was so sure there would be sunshine at the end of it. A sweet gift, truly; but he must not stand there by the fire, staring at it as though it had dropped upon him out of the clouds. He must throw himself carelessly into the easy-chair, and look quite comfortable and unconcerned, for Betsy had just come upstairs with the tea-kettle, and Mrs. Mallinson's compliments, and would Mr. Deeping be so kind as not to turn the gas up so high, for the smoke was affecting the ceiling, which it never used to do when the family occupied the room themselves. And would he be as good as leave out the money for the grocer's bill? The lad had called for it twice that week, and Mrs. Mallinson never liked the tradesmen being kept waiting for their accounts.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THEN Betsy went downstairs again, leaving him to the companionship of his returned letter, and any reflections he might have to make thereupon.

Just the letter, unopened, without a word of sympathy or regret, not even an explanation of the change of feeling which had led her to return it at all. Doubtless Miss Jeanie Lyneton intended his own "sense of honour" and "consciousness of the position which he occupied towards the Manor-house family" to supply that trifling deficiency.

So Jeanie too had turned against him.

Jeanie, who ten days ago had let her hand lie in his, who had spoken to him so trustfully, so lovingly, as though nothing in the world could come between them. Those gentle, pleasant words of hers, that frank smile, that shy yet guileless look, which betrayed, even while it sought to hide the loving heart within, had all been just a web of deceit. She had only been amusing herself with him, practising upon him down there in that quiet home, before she tried the same performance on a larger scale in the great world of London society. It was an elegant game for a young lady, and she had played it very elegantly too, he falling in so completely with all her pretty moves and devices, not knowing how soon and how cruelly he should be checkmated. Oh, Jeanie! And he had thought her so innocent. He had had such boundless

faith in her. She had been the awakener of his best life ; he had looked to her to strengthen and sustain it too. All that he wished to do, all that he wished to be, was only for her dear sake ; that he might become more worthy of her, that he might climb slowly step by step, past all those vexing bars of rank and caste, and hold out to her one day a hand which her own need not reach so very far down to take.

Hugh was on the edge of a deep pitfall. He might even yet, by one brave effort, turn away from it and keep in the safe path, though that was indeed a gloomy path. The night was very dark, but there was a hand that would have guided him still and brought him out again to the sunshine at last. Or he might take the other step ; it was but a single step, and fall into the horrible pit and the

miry clay, out of which, if he ever came at all, it would be with many a wound, whose scar could never be quite healed in this life.

Hugh took that one step. He thought of the past six months in which he had laboured so hard, laboured not only with brain and hand for daily bread, but with the far harder labour of soul to crush down unworthy thoughts, and conquer selfish motives, and cherish a pure, lofty inner life. He thought of his prayers so useless, his faith so mispent and vain. He thought of Jeanie, her guileless, trustful smile, which had the sting of the serpent in it; her feigned love which had wrought such mischief for him. He looked at his letter, sent back to him without a word; gave up what next to a man's giving up his faith in God is the saddest renunciation of all, his faith in woman's truth, and then

worked off his indignation in a loud, harsh voice, so loud that Mrs. Mallinson heard it downstairs in the back parlour, and thought Mr. Deeping must be getting touched in his intellects.

He could not help it. All seemed such a hollow mockery. God's goodness, woman's faith, man's honour—he had better join in and mock too, as loudly as the rest. Life itself, for anything he knew, might just be one great piece of mockery too, in which the louder one could laugh and the madder one could be, the merrier. And then, as the song said, that weird, uncomfortable song he had once heard Miss Lyneton sing—

“The sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep.”

And good-bye to all the nonsense and heartlessness and deception that made life here such pitiful fool's play.

That was Hugh's thought. Hugh who once made such high resolves, and planned out for himself such a very noble path, and looked forward to winning great influence over his fellow-men, doing them so much good, helping them on in the true way, holding out his light that they, seeing it, might walk more surely, and come safely to the mountain top at last. And where was his light now, and where was any good that he could do? And what was the use of toil and trust and love if they served him so, if all they could do for him was to land him in such a pit-fall as this? He had better have let them alone. He was much happier before he knew anything about them.

Mr. Lyneton had done the thing handsomely, though, after all. Six months' salary paid without the trouble of earning a penny of it;

a whole six months of Saturday afternoon holidays, with no loss of pay. He could afford a few jollifications now with his fellow-clerks at the Bellona iron-works, fashionable, fast young men, who had asked him so many times to join them in their tavern dinners, or to take an oar with them when they rowed down the river sometimes on a Sunday afternoon to have a merry-making at the Castle Gardens, a few miles out of town. And Hugh, poor, foolish fellow! had turned from them with such utter distaste. He drink at low tavern dinners, who could sit in that quaint old oriel-room at Lyneton Abbots, and listen to Jeanie's voice, and feel her quiet eyes upon him, eyes so pure and loving? *He* join in riotous Sunday afternoon merry-making down the river, who had sat in St. Hilda's church, and prayed the same prayers with

Jeanie, and felt his thoughts lifted heavenwards with the same noble words which lifted hers thither, too? No; small need of tavern dinners, or Sunday merry-making for him, who had a sweet, bright life, so far above them.

But now all that sort of thing had passed away. He might as well be gay. It lasted as long as anything, indeed very much longer than some things lasted, woman's truth amongst the rest. He would go next time they asked him, and be as merry as the rest of them.

That is if he stayed at the Bellona ironworks, which seemed very uncertain now. For counting-house drudgery would seem slower than ever after this, unless he took the extra work which Mr. Feverige had offered him in the cashier's room, at an advance of salary.

And there was no great inducement now to earn more money for the sake of finishing his college course, or getting those coveted years of study in Germany. He go to college and be a divinity student again, and set himself up for a teacher of others! Hugh laughed outright again, more loudly than before. He could teach them one thing at any rate; not to believe too much, and not to trust at all.

No, he would like to be out of the country altogether—perhaps off to New Zealand. He had heard that a pleasant thing might be made of life out there amongst the scrub, for a set of young fellows who were not afraid of roughing it, or having a breeze now and then with the natives. And Hugh felt as if he could thoroughly enjoy roughing it, or sparring with the natives even to

within an inch of his life. That was the very thing he could enter into, under present circumstances. Or the gold diggings. That was a fine opening, they said, for a young man. Or he might go with his cousin, the mate of the ship *Lucy*, on a whaling expedition to Greenland. Best of all that, for there was plenty of excitement and daring and adventure in a little excursion of that sort. The *Lucy* was outward bound in a month or two, suppose he was to join her and try his skill at whaling? At any rate it would be a contrast to keeping accounts at the Bellona iron-works, or reading early English romances to faithless young ladies, who praised his sweet voice and then played him so false.

Only—and Hugh thought of a little cottage far away out in Jersey. A little cottage he had not seen now, except in dreams, for six

months; with Virginian creepers twining over the windows, and a sea-breeze stirring the leaves in the garden, and a gentle quiet woman—his mother—sitting at that window, thinking of him, or perhaps kneeling by a white-curtained bed, praying for him; asking that the merciful God would take care of him and keep him from the vice and wickedness of the great town of Oresbridge, and lead him into green pastures and beside still waters, and help him to make a noble and a worthy thing of his life. Asking God to do all this for him; the merciful God who seemed quite to have forgotten him and cast him away, who was showing him nothing of life now but its exceeding bitterness, and leading him into anything but green pastures. Hugh could have laughed again, only the thought of his widowed mother, praying for him, kept him

from it. But what was the use of praying, and where was the mercifulness of letting a poor lad be deceived, and betrayed, and wronged; a poor lad who had tried to do his best, and live a decent honest life? And if this was the blessed fruit of righteousness, it was a fruit one could be well content not to taste.

Still it was very kind of his mother to pray for him, and the thought of her doing it made Hugh pause in his wild schemes for the future. Greenland was doubtless a very fine place for cooling a young man's over-heated excitement; the very name of it had a sound of frozen calmness, like Miss Lyneton's voice. And one could get sport enough amongst the New Zealand scrub, or out in the gold diggings of Ballarat, if sport was the only thing to be thought about.

But neither Greenland whaling expeditions, nor heroic encounters with natives amongst New Zealand scrub, nor a year or two's experience with the choice society of the gold-diggings, would furnish him with quarterly five-pound notes for that mother of his who had done so much for him—who was even now thinking of him and praying for him, who had denied herself so many comforts that he might have years of college study; who, unable to do that for him any longer, was dependant now upon him for the little help which would keep herself and his sister from actual want. No; he must go back to the Bellona iron-works, and do what forgetting he had to do there, amongst its blazing furnaces and fiery serpents of red-hot iron—Hugh knew worse fiery serpents than those now—and its mailed puddlers and

its din of steam hammers and boiler-plate rollers. No wild life of daring and adventure for him; no casting off of old memories in the perilous excitement of new dangers. What had been must be again, and he must bear it patiently as he could.

So Hugh Deeping went back again to the Bellona iron-works. Went back not sad-hearted and silent, with the sadness and the silence of a man who has known great disappointment, yet will struggle through it to something nobler than he was before; conquering his enemy, and taking that very enemy to clear his way to fresh victories. He went back with the rash daring of the man who, shaken in his trust for others, resolves to trust no longer either God or his friend—only himself. A feeble trust that, even for the man whose heart is stout and

strong, but trust weaker than any bruised reed for him who, knowing little of life, leans upon that which he has never proved; which can only pierce him through in the day of his bitterest need.

And there, week after week, Hugh laboured on with desperate energy, wearing out brain and sinews in the toil; not resting them much when, with a set of jolly companions, he rowed down the river on a Sunday afternoon, for a merry-making in the Castle Gardens, or sang songs with his fellow-clerks at those roisterous tavern dinners, where he was always maddest and merriest; no jokes so bright as his, no wit so sparkling, no stories so piquant and racy.

A careless, free-and-easy life. Only doing his work properly, and keeping correct hours at Mrs. Mallinson's, it was nobody's concern

but his own. So long as he paid his rent punctually, and left out the money for the tradesmen's accounts, and kept his gas turned down to a proper degree of moderation, and smoked no cigars in the sitting-room, and brought no young men in with him to spoil the carpet with their dirty boots; and never kept them waiting for him at night, whilst he staid out at some social gathering, setting the table in a roar with his flashes of merriment, it was of little consequence to Mrs. Mallinson where his holiday leisure was spent. The prophecies concerning the Lyneton Abbots affair had come to a most triumphant fulfilment. There were no more Saturday evenings with the young ladies now, no more books, with the Lyneton crest upon them, brought home to read, and so carefully treasured up in brown-paper covers on the safest

shelf of the recess cupboard. Of course she knew very well what all that sort of thing would come to. Mr. Lyneton had had his own ends to serve, and he had served them. People said the estate was looking up again now. There was no need for an assistant, and so the young man had been dismissed; she hoped without any reflection on his character, but certainly the dismissal had been somewhat sudden. She had her own suspicions that things were not quite as they ought to be. There was no mention made, if she remembered rightly, of the engagement only lasting six months. It looked strange, to say the least of it.

And Mrs. Mallinson sniffed.

Not that it was of much consequence now, though, what Mr. Deeping's prospects might be, or under what circumstances he had

ceased to pay those Saturday afternoon visits to Lyneton Abbots. Mrs. Mallinson was happy to say that, if he did not appreciate his privileges in being welcomed into the back parlour, other people did, and there were other businesses quite as lucrative as anything in the way of iron; and young Mr. Reynolds, who had just opened a large confectioner's shop in one of the most public streets of Oresbridge, and who had taken the vacant sitting in No. 25, Grosmont Road chapel, and who always escorted Sarah Matilda home on a Sunday night, was everything that could be desired, and of first-rate business habits, and on the high road to a country house, and everything that was comfortable. And for Mrs. Mallinson's part, she was very thankful that things had gone no further than they had with the new lodger,

because this prospective settlement was in every way so much more advantageous.

Hugh Deeping, then, was not greatly interfered with by his landlady, nor honoured with any more invitations into the back parlour when Sarah Matilda had company. And so long as he did his work well, and kept those long columns of figures correctly added up, and had his monthly statements ready for the senior partner to overlook, and paid the workmen's wages regularly, Mr. Feverige had no right, neither had he any disposition, to inquire further.

So he launched out into a reckless, care-for-nothing life, such as most men live, who, as the common phrase is, take hold of their troubles by the wrong handle. He kept up a respectable appearance at his lodging, never indulging in any violent extravagance

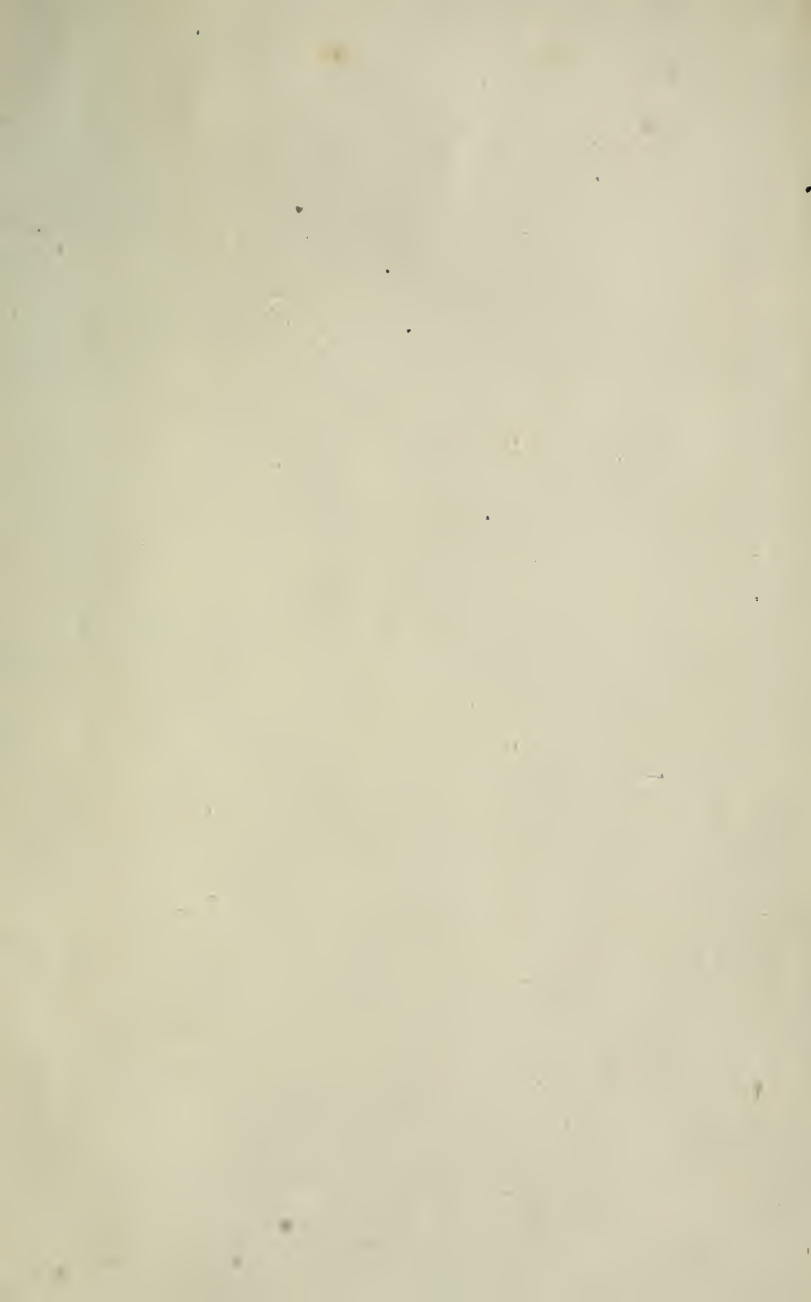
or startling Mrs. Mallinson's propriety by introduction of his jolly companions into her showily-furnished sitting-room. And he wrote home as usual to his mother and sister, careless, off-hand letters, out of which he kept carefully enough all stain of bitterness or disappointment. There was no need for them to be troubled by the sort of life he was leading. There was no need for his mother to know how vain were those prayers of hers that her only boy might be kept from the follies and perils of the great town of Oresbridge. Let her pray on, whilst she could. Sometimes there shone into his heart, as night shows the reflection of glimmering stars far down in some dark well, memories of the old happy time when he thought of God, and loved Jeanie, and had faith in a noble future. But they

were growing fewer and fewer as the clouds gathered, and the mists thickened. By-and-by they would all be gone.

Hugh Deeping lived this life, until the Great Father, who, unremembered, remembers His children with a love that knows no change, laid His hand quietly upon it, and bid its feverish pulses be still for a little season.

That Wednesday evening, when Hugh came home from the Bellona works, and found the letter which he had written to Jeanie returned unopened, a fair-haired, moustached gentleman of military aspect was reading the *Times* in a first-class carriage on the line from London to Oresbridge.

It was Maurice Demeron.



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